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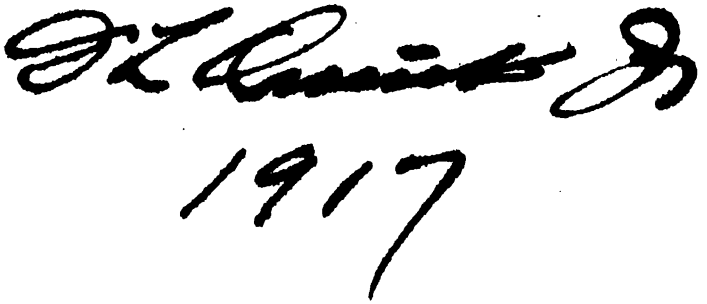

THE WITCH OF ENDOR

ROBERT NORWOOD

THE WITCH *of* ENDOR

A TRAGEDY

BY

ROBERT NORWOOD

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TO
GRACE BLACKBURN

"At the first I saw naught but the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof showed Saul."

Robert Browning.

CHARACTERS

SAUL, King of Israel.
SAMUEL, the Prophet.
AHIMELECH, the High Priest.
DOEG, High Priest of Baal and Saul's Chief Minister.
ABNER, Captain of the host of Saul.
JONATHAN, ISHUI } Sons of Saul.
DAVID, Saul's Harpist.
JOAB, ABISHAI, ASAHEL } Friends of David and Jonathan.
LORUHAMAH, the Witch of Endor and Priestess of Ashtoreth.
AHINOAM, a Gleaner; afterwards the Queen.
MICHAL, MERAB } Daughters of Saul and Ahinoam.
RACHEL, a Gleaner.
ELDERS, LEVITES, MEN AND WOMEN.

ACTS

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THE WITCH OF ENDOR

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ACT I

TIME.—*The Barley Harvest; late afternoon.*

SCENE.—*A field on the uplands of Benjamin, along which extend ordered rows of the gathered grain. At right, near a grove of olives, and half-way up the field, is a broken oil-press. A path winds through clustered palms at left to rear. In the rear the plain sweeps away to where the Jordan winds among the reeds and sedges. Beyond the Jordan a vista of mountains looming through a purple haze edged with sunset-gold. Gleaners are moving up and down the field, gathering what is left from the harvest. In the foreground two women—the one old and haggard—the other young and of an exquisite grace—are binding their bundles with ropes of twisted straw. At the oil-press, with her gleanings at her feet, sits a woman of unusual beauty. She is tall and her hair is the colour of red wine. The younger of the two gleaners stands up from her task, stretching her arms above her head; the elder sinks wearily beside her bundle.*

AHINOAM. At last the toil of day is done.
RACHEL. At last!
AHINOAM. Let us fare homeward.
RACHEL. I am weary—wait.
AHINOAM [*facing the oil-press*].
So is the Tyrian—Rachel, she is sad!
RACHEL. Not sad, Ahinoam, but proud! Always
Toils she apart from us, silent and proud.
AHINOAM. And in her silence and her pride she pleads
For touch of fellowship.
RACHEL. Why fellowship?
AHINOAM. Rachel, how hard you are!
RACHEL [*rising in passion*].
Ahinoam,
It is a time for hardness and for hate;
A time for passion—not for gentle tears:
A time to smite; a time to slay,—for heaven
Holds clouds of doom above our heads, and death
Rides on the wind! Jehovah in His wrath
Sends Amalek and Gath to winnow us
Like chaff from wheat! The stranger in our gates
Is an abomination and a curse;
Therefore I hate your silent Tyrian,
And in her silence and her pride I read
Laughter and scorn at us. . . . Ahinoam,
She is a sorceress, and gleans these fields
To bind on us the spell of Ashtoreth!

AHINOAM [*startled, and drawing back*].
Nay, you are surely wrong!
RACHEL. Mark well her face!
AHINOAM. It is a lovely face!
RACHEL. Faugh!
[*She turns and peers up and down the field.*]
AHINOAM. Why do you
Go gaping in among the barley sheaves?
RACHEL [*returns to Ahinoam, a finger on her lips*].
Give ear to me. No one must hearken. Saul
Is lost for love of her!
AHINOAM. Mere idle tales.
RACHEL [*shaking her finger at Ahinoam*].
The grinding stones cry: "Grist is at the mill."
AHINOAM. And sounding jars say: "We are empty."
RACHEL. 'Tis known
There is betwixt them an unlawful love!
AHINOAM. Was ever love of man for maid unstained
By gossip?
RACHEL. Watch awhile and you will see.
AHINOAM [*scornfully*].
And spy on them!
RACHEL. So grapes were brought from Eschol!
AHINOAM [*recoiling from Rachel*].
You would make me a spy!
RACHEL. And save the king.

AHINOAM. No danger threatens Saul whom Samuel
Anointed at Jehovah's word.
RACHEL. Foolish!
Do you not know what the anointing means?
Do you not know that Saul is Holiness
Unto the Lord? Do you not know the crown
Rests on his head to-morrow morn at Mizpeh?
AHINOAM. Yea, this and many other things I know:
If Saul be king of Israel, his word
Makes lawful what of old the Law condemned;
Therefore the king may wed with whom he will.
RACHEL. He may not wed save in the Covenant.
[*Points to Loruhamah.*]
She stands outside the Law and is unclean!
AHINOAM. Why have you hardened all your heart against her?
RACHEL. Because I know she binds Saul by the arts
Of Ashtoreth; holds him with awful vows
Made over living babes burned at the shrine
In Askelon!
AHINOAM [*startled*]. Where have you gained this knowledge?
RACHEL. There are two ears in Israel that hear—
Two eyes that see!
AHINOAM [*impatiently*]. I would you did speak plainly.
RACHEL [*knowingly and with a leer*].

A man in love is always evident,
He sings his secret as he goes!

AHINOAM. Yes, yes!
But still you have not told what I would know.

RACHEL. Moonrise on Carmel's not more clearly seen
Than Saul in love!

AHINOAM. Why will you play with words?

RACHEL. The better to prepare you for our task
In saving Saul from clutch of Ashtoreth.

AHINOAM. Why all this talk of Ashtoreth?

RACHEL. My secret.

AHINOAM [*gathers up her bundle*].
Which I will leave with you, for I must go.

RACHEL [*detaining her*].
You shall not go until I tell you all:
When Saul was hunting for a herd of asses
Strayed from his father's fields, he turned aside
To ask the Oracle of Ashtoreth
For word of them; and there he met the Priestess,
Before whose beauty Saul in love fell down;
And she has followed him to Benjamin,
Garbed as a gleaner, lest she lose her hold
On him.

AHINOAM. Who told you this wild tale?

RACHEL. They meet
Here often and I listen well!

AHINOAM. You say
She is a priestess?

RACHEL. Of such idolatries
That Prophet Samuel would whiten her
With leprosy, ere Saul shamed his anointing
By wedding her!

AHINOAM. Yet when the first ripe sheaf was waved at Shiloh,
I saw her kneel, clasp hands and bow her head—
Would you call that idolatry?

RACHEL. Tush, tush!
A woman's heart can build a sudden shrine
To tabernacle what she deeply loves,
To keep and cover from all other eyes
The object of her passion.

AHINOAM. Did not Ruth
Wed Boaz?

RACHEL. Child, Ruth lived within the Law.

AHINOAM. May not the Priestess live within the Law?

RACHEL. Do you not know the goddess Ashtoreth
Of all abominations is the worst?
Have you not heard that we must trample down
Idolatry, till Jacob's land is cleansed?
Saul's task must be to purify this land
From idols; ours to save him from the Priestess.
[*Clutching her hand.*]
Come with me to Ahimelech!

AHINOAM [*resisting her*]. Not that—
She will be stoned to death!

RACHEL. Come with me!

AHINOAM. No!

RACHEL [*pointing up the field at the departing gleaners*].

Already go the gleaners. . . . Come with me,
And tell the High Priest and the Elders. They
Will banish Loruhamah and save Saul
To his high task of ruling Israel.

AHINOAM [*yielding to Rachel*].

If you will plead for banishment, I go.

RACHEL [*moving towards path at left with Ahinoam*].

For banishment
I pledge you I will plead.

[*As they enter the wood Ahinoam looks back at Loruhamah, who leaves the oil-press with her gleanings and comes slowly down to front. Ahinoam turns and follows Rachel up the path to Gibeah. They disappear among the trees. The glow of the sunset falls on the barley sheaves. A sound of trumpets from the city, calls the hour of evening sacrifice.*]

GLEANERS [*singing*]. Summer is ended and harvest is here.
The sickle hath sung at the feet of the corn—
Sung as the barley bowed down to the year—
Play up the young moon with harp and with horn!

[*Loruhamah, with her gleanings in her arms, stands watching the singers, who gradually*

fade from view along the woodland path. At the oil-press Doeg suddenly appears, looks about him, and then discovers Loruhamah. He draws near to her with stealthy footsteps. He pauses and lifts up his right hand for salutation.]

DOEG [*smoothly and with unction*].

Peace be to the fair handmaid of the Lord!

LORUHAMAH [*lets fall her gleanings with a cry of fear and faces Doeg*].

Doeg!

DOEG [*swiftly approaching*].

By Baal! . . . Loruhamah, you!

LORUHAMAH. Why are you here?

DOEG [*with a sneer*].

To glean these fields with you!

LORUHAMAH. You taunt me!

DOEG. Ah?

LORUHAMAH. Will you not answer me?

DOEG. What have you done with Saul?

LORUHAMAH. What have I done?

[*Points toward Gibeah.*]

They watch me!

DOEG. Even as the gods? . . . Recall
Your oath before the knees of Ashtoreth!

LORUHAMAH. I tell you, Doeg, mine's a bitter task.
They know that I am come from Askelon,
And close me in with barriers of eyes.

DOEG. Then must you act to-night! Loruhamah,

This son of Kish must not ascend the throne,
For he has in him an unconscious strength—
An undeveloped gift for governing—
Which, proved, will make him grow to be a god,
A thunderer, a destiny, a death,
Loss and a limitless eternal woe
On Baal, Molech, Dagon, Ashtoreth!

LORUHAMAH. But he will not away with me—insists
That I become an Israelite!

DOEG. That you—!
Oh, mouth of Molech!—You an Israelite?
The man is mad!

LORUHAMAH. Is mad?

DOEG. Is mad, I say—
His people, righteous fools, would find you out
And tear you limb from limb! Think you their god
Loves Ashtoreth?

LORUHAMAH. Then take the task set by the jealous gods
In your own hands!

DOEG. No, you are sworn to it.

LORUHAMAH. I will forget my oath!

DOEG. The gods will not!

LORUHAMAH. Always the gods!

DOEG. Yea, verily the gods!

LORUHAMAH. But Saul will not forsake the waiting throne;
Fumes with impatience to rid all the land

Of Moab and Philistia, and swears
Vengeance on Amalek.

DOEG. Then it must be:
You pious, posturing before his god,
And singing psalms upon a psaltery!
What laughter of the lofty gods will be
When Loruhamah mimics Miriam,
And dances to the timbrels—! Go, make Saul
Forget Jehovah's dreary Decalogue;
Drive him against His Prophet and His Priest;
Draw him with ever tightening cords of craft,
Until he blunder like behemoth—bound
And helpless in the pit of his destruction!

LORUHAMAH [*breathlessly*].
This would the gods of me?

DOEG. Who gave you beauty!

LORUHAMAH [*after a pause*].
What if I win him from the crown?

DOEG. The gods
Care not. Have you your way with Saul, whose bulk
Of body presses sore upon your heart.

LORUHAMAH. This do you swear?

DOEG. By Baal's self I swear,
That if you tempt Saul from the throne, or make
Him fail when he is set thereon, your heart
May burn oblations of your love; but keep
Your oath, or else a curse will follow you
Down all your days until they end in death!

LORUHAMAH. Then leave me to my task.

[*Doeg turns and goes towards the oil-press, Loruhamah gazing after him. At the oil-press he stands and looks back.*]

DOEG. Your oath! Your oath!

LORUHAMAH [*as Doeg disappears*].

Oh, Saul!

[*She stands with her face toward the oil-press. Among the trees at left the tall and noble form of Saul is discovered. He follows the path and crosses the field to Loruhamah and encircles her with his arms.*]

SAUL. Guess now who holds you!

LORUHAMAH. Saul!

SAUL. Not Saul,

But Love!

LORUHAMAH. Love! . . . Are you sure, my Saul?

SAUL. Are you not sure?

LORUHAMAH [*frees herself from Saul's embrace and faces him*].

What woman may be certain of a man?

SAUL. She who of women is most beautiful!

LORUHAMAH. Your tongue falls swiftly, like a flail!

SAUL. And yours

Fans words, as wheat is winnowed from the chaff!

Come, kiss me! for my lips are lonely.

LORUHAMAH [*avoiding his arms with a laugh*].
Nay!
You must account for your long tarrying.
SAUL. Relentless mistress of Egyptian tasks!
Command you tale of bricks without the straw?
A kiss before I speak.
LORUHAMAH. Are kisses straw?
Oh, clumsy one with words! Where have you been?
SAUL. Calling your name among the hills;
And only echoes answered until now.
LORUHAMAH. As only echoes answer in my heart,
When you are absent from me.
SAUL [*taking her hands and studying her face*].
Loruhamah,
You tremble! And the lovely face of you
Pales as in terror!
LORUHAMAH [*turns her face from him with a dissembling laugh*].
Oh, you fanciful—!
I am but weary from the gleaning, Saul;
See how these hands are hardened.
SAUL [*lifting her hands to his lips*].
I will make
Them soft again with kisses; they are mine!
LORUHAMAH. Until you take them they must toil.
SAUL. Dear hands,
What miracle have you not wrought in me!
A little while, and all the world shall bend

To kiss you—you whose lightest touch shall turn
Kingdoms like doors upon their hinges!
[*Saul gathers her in his arms.*]

LORUHAMAH. Saul!

SAUL. My Queen!

LORUHAMAH. Oh, come away with me this night!

SAUL. Wherefore this night, when on the morrow's morn
Life and the world are ours?

LORUHAMAH. I fear the throne,
And you uplifted high!

SAUL. Ascend with me,
Nor be afraid! . . . Why are you shaken so?

LORUHAMAH [*breaks from Saul's arm with a cry of terror*].
A god breathed on my face, and in his breath
Portent of sorrowing!

SAUL. Why all this fear?
When first I met you, you were not afraid.

LORUHAMAH. When soul meets soul there is not any fear;
It is the morning of the world; the breath
Of all the woodland gods blows on the face,
Brings up the flowers and commands the birds,
Shakes myriad raindrops from the leafy boughs,
And sends the thousand lances of the sun
Against the shadows. . . . Joy is everywhere,
And love is everywhere!

SAUL. When soul meets soul
That moment's memory takes wings to fly
Beyond the barriers of fate and finds
Fulfilment in the certainty of love,
Laughs at all shadows, knows no present fear;
Therefore, have done with dread and threatening
Of dreams.

LORUHAMAH. Have done with dread, when hate of men
Blows tempest-blackness on the bluest sky
Above which dwell the gods who always are
For darkness and for doom? Ah, Saul, the world
Was cradled in a serpent's nest and lulled
To slumber by its hissing!

SAUL. As Jordan bends
Afar his silver bow, like some great archer
Gone hunting in an autumn land of gold,
So will this hand draw man's resistance back,
Set the strong shaft of purpose to the cord
And send it singing to the mark, though all
The shields of Gath were in the way!

LORUHAMAH. But yet
I fear the gods who, throned upon the years,
Fret in the heavens when they see us climb;
And lest we win to their divine content,
Place on the upward path shadow and storm—
Loss of the ones we love—doubt, and then—death!

SAUL. Lift up your eyes and see these harvest-fields.
Behold the mountains clothed like ancient kings
In purple majesty, whose hoary heads
Day in departing crowns with diadems;
They stand, those monarchs of ten thousand years,
As witnesses of an unchanging truth:
That joy and beauty are but hidden souls
Revealed to him who looks on life and laughs.

LORUHAMAH [*kindling at these words, claps her hands*].
You sorcerer! . . . You driving fear from me!

SAUL [*embracing her*].
You sorceress! . . . You beautiful! . . . My love!

LORUHAMAH. When you are crowned will you forget the maid
Who met you on the temple-stair and loved
You ere our voices mingled into speech?

SAUL. Then was I crowned, who did not know how love
Makes man a king!

LORUHAMAH. Upon the temple-tower
I watched the stars with my astrologers,
When word was brought to me: "Saul, son of Kish,
Stands waiting at the doors of Ashtoreth."
No sudden sign was in the Zodiac;
Orion and the tangled Pleiades

Locked up their oracles; nathless, I knew
Love stood without the gate, and so I said:
"Let Saul, the son of Kish, ascend to me."

SAUL. Breathless, I tarried for the messenger;
Then all unheeding him I crossed the court,
I found the stair and saw you like a star
Within the shadow of the golden dome!

LORUHAMAH. I said: "Who are you?"

SAUL. I: "One waked from sleep!"

LORUHAMAH. And I: "Where have you been these years?"

SAUL. And I:
"Lost as in dreams till now!"

LORUHAMAH. And then the night
Clasped her white arms about us and we kissed!

SAUL. And then I knew your breath was frankincense;
Your lips pomegranate buds; your eyes twin sapphires;
And your great spirit—Flame!

LORUHAMAH. Within my heart
There stirred melodious imaginings,
And voices sang in tumult as of joy:
"My love is like a lion on the hills;
His words are like the wind among the vines;
His throat a temple-pillar, and his brow
Snow on a lofty mountain in the dawn!"

SAUL. My heart beat back divine antiphonies:
"She is like wine poured from a crystal bowl
And spilled upon the rose that is her mouth!"

LORUHAMAH [*offering her lips*].

A chalice that is brimmed with kisses—Drink!

SAUL [*bending over her*].

And pledge our future, Maid of Askelon!

[*Voices are heard at left. Saul and Loruhamah start back and turn towards the woodland path, whence streams a throng of people—Rachel leading them, followed by Ahimelech in his priestly robes, with Ahinoam and a company of elders. Loruhamah looks from the people to Saul with a troubled face. He stands dignified and royal. Rachel points with a scream of anger and excitement; and at her outcry many gather up stones by the way.*]

RACHEL. Behold them!

PEOPLE. Sorceress!

SAUL [*leaves Loruhamah and advances to the people with uplifted arms*].

SAUL. Stand back!

RACHEL. Stone her!

[*The people rush at Loruhamah with threatening gestures.*]

AHIMELECH. Nay; you shall not do violence on her!

PEOPLE [*stand at the voice of Ahimelech*].

Give us the sorceress!

A WOMAN. You shameless one!

A WOMAN. Harlot!

A WOMAN. And oh, the flaunting face of her!

SAUL [*shaken with anger*].
You pack of jackals and hyenas. Silence!
RACHEL. Send home your harlot!
AN ELDER. Shame, you son of Kish!
AHIMELECH [*to Saul*].
What do you here with one who is unclean?
SAUL. Priest of the living God, your turbaned head
These hands shall twist from you, if you but speak
That word again!
AN ELDER [*throwing dust on his head*].
He is beside himself.
Thus to address the Lord's High Priest!
AN ELDER. Blasphemy!
RACHEL. Did I not say he is bewitched of her?
PEOPLE. The sorceress! . . . Let her be stoned to death!
LORUHAMAH [*clinging to Saul*].
Oh, Saul! Now Ashtoreth lifts up her hand!
RACHEL [*running at Loruhamah with curved fingers*].
You self-confessed idolatress!
[*To the people.*]
What need
Have you of further witness?
PEOPLE [*closing in on Saul and Loruhamah*].
Idolatress!
SAUL. Stand back! Or by the sudden doom of Sinai,

You shall not call me King!

[*The people fall back, muttering.*]

AHIMELECH [*to Saul*].

You are the King;
Therefore, you must withdraw yourself from her!

SAUL. I will not, Priest!

AHIMELECH. You are the Lord's anointed!
The gods of Canaan rule this Promised Land,
And you are set to drag their altars down—
For this you must be clean from stain of idols.

SAUL. What sin is in man's honest love for woman?

AHIMELECH. She is without the Covenant! Therefore,
Your love is sin!

SAUL. If she profess the Faith?

AHIMELECH. Then shall she be a daughter of the Law;
But you must surely know it is not meet
To take a wife from the Uncircumcised.

SAUL. If Loruhamah stand within the Law,
Is she not Holiness before the Lord?

AHIMELECH. Yea, even as you say.

SAUL [*with a cry of joy*].

Then, Priest, behold
My chosen spouse!

AHIMELECH [*holding up his hand*].

Think of the lofty place
From which you are ordained to govern us!

No taint of gentile blood must touch the throne,
Whereon to-morrow morn you shall be crowned;
Therefore your wife must be of your own Tribe.

AN ELDER. You have well said, my Lord Ahimelech!

SAUL [*turning away*].
Then let another king rule over you,
And I will to my olive groves again—
My fields and vineyards!

PEOPLE [*clamouring*].
Saul. you are the King!
We'll have none other!

SAUL [*with an arm about Loruhamah*].
Then, behold your Queen!

RACHEL. What blasphemy is this? . . . Saul, you are mad!
You men of Benjamin, release your King
From clutch of Ashtoreth; her Priestess stone,
And set him free!
[*The people mutter and talk among themselves. Suddenly Ahinoam comes forth and takes Loruhamah by the hand.*]

AHINOAM [*to Loruhamah*].
Now will I plead your cause!
[*Addressing the people, who are silenced by her voice.*]
Are all your hearts hard as the nether stone?
You who have loved a man and borne him babes,
Give ear unto my speech!

A WOMAN. Say on! Say on!

A WOMAN. Yea, we will harken to Ahinoam.
RACHEL. Her tongue is honey, but stings like an asp!
A WOMAN. Speak—speak, Ahinoam!
AHINOAM. Priest of the Lord,
Is it not written in the Holy Book
That man shall leave his father's house and cleave
Unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh?
What rending of the Word of God is this;
What darkening of counsel and what craft!
Oh, ever has it been since fall of Eve—
The burden on our backs we women bear,
While men stand by debating of the Law,
And haggling over their phylacteries!
Love is the Law; and therefore Love is Judge;
And by that Law and with that Judge we try
This woman's cause!
SAUL [*makes obeisance to Ahinoam*].
O Love that pleads so well!
A WOMAN. The truth is on her lips!
A WOMAN. And honey falls
Sweet from her tongue!
A WOMAN. An Oracle of God!
RACHEL. A lie is on her lips!
AN ELDER. Ahimelech,
Why are you silent?
PEOPLE. Speak, Ahimelech!
AHIMELECH [*to Ahinoam*].
Daughter of Benjamin, you are the one

Whom Saul should wed! . . . And now I say to you,
That though your pleading be like Aaron's staff,
Bursting to bloom when other staves are dry;
And though yours be an angel's eloquence,
Convincing even Lucifer at last
That Right is Might; what I have said is said!

RACHEL [*with fervour*].

And wisely said!
[*To Loruhamah.*]
Ha, ha! You sorceress!

SAUL. Then hear my words: Let night drink up the day;
Let silence fall on laughter; break the heart
And blind all eyes with weeping; let the wide,
Sad deserts fling their dust on temples, till
With woe and waste of sorrowing the world
Shatters to fragments; yet will I love this maid
And hold to her: I, Saul, your King, have said!

LORUHAMAH [*to Saul*].

The gods breathe on my face and I am cold!
[*Loruhamah sways slightly and then stands rigid in a trance. Saul starts toward her with a loud cry. The people are frightened and move apart at left, leaving only Ahimelech, Rachel and Ahinoam standing near Saul and Loruhamah.*]

SAUL [*on his knees before Loruhamah and seizing her hands*].

Wake! Loruhamah, from this dream of death.
[*He looks up into her face, and after a pause continues*].
Your wide eyes stare into the infinite!

AHIMELECH [*with uplifted hand and bowed head*].
She is about to prophesy!

RACHEL [*rushing toward the people and flinging her arms about*].
Witchcraft!
Take heed lest she work witchery on you!

AN ELDER. Black craft of Ashtoreth is in this sleep!

SAUL. Oh, Loruhamah!

AHIMELECH [*to the people*].
Kneel! Kneel! the Infinite
Draws near to speak to us!

A WOMAN [*with a scream of terror*].
I am afraid!

A MAN [*to the woman*].
Obey the Priest, you trembling fool!

AHIMELECH. Bow down!
[*All kneel. Loruhamah begins to speak in a low monotone that gathers in volume as the vision unfolds to her.*]

LORUHAMAH. I hear far voices that come from the deep
And dim abysses of the dark! . . . A shout
Bursts on the world: "All hail, King Saul!" . . .
A noise of war and shattering of shields;

Thunder of chariots and crash of spears;
Screams as of fighters dying in the fray;
A mist of blood—and through the mist the dead!
Saul throned in glory over all the world,
And near him stands a man with face of light,
Playing upon a harp! . . . Shadows descend! . . .
I am afraid! . . . Oh, terrible! . . . Thine eyes,
Great angel, turn from me! . . . I will not that!
—Nay! do not ask me, angel—Must I slay
Love with my hands? . . . See how His bright wings fold,
Hurt at thy word! . . . If I do this, I die!
What have I done that I should suffer so?
Still dost thou look at me. . . . O veil thine eyes!
I will! . . . I will! . . . Saul! Saul! thou art the King!

AHIMELECH [*leaping to his feet*].
Jehovah's Voice has spoken!
[*Loruhamah begins to sway. Saul stands and holds her in his arms, calling to her.*]

SAUL. Loruhamah!
[*The people rise from their knees. Loruhamah looks up into Saul's face.*]

LORUHAMAH. Oh, Saul! I have slain Love!

SAUL [*triumphantly*].
Not so; He lives

And holds you to His heart!

LORUHAMAH. Go from me, Saul!

SAUL. Go from you? Never!

LORUHAMAH. You must go from me:
This have the gods decreed! Who may withstand
The gods?

SAUL. Love! . . . Only Love!

AHIMELECH [*to Saul*].
Jehovah's Word
None may withstand!

SAUL [*to Ahimelech*].
Priest, I would set my love
Against Jehovah's Word and dare the gulf
Of Tophet for the lips which He has forced
To prophesy against her heart!

AHIMELECH [*recoils in horror from Saul and covers his eyes with his hands*].
Saul! Saul!

SAUL [*to Loruhamah*].
Come, Loruhamah! Let us leave this place,
And go beyond the hills to Babylon—
There I will build for you fair palaces
And pour the balms of Calah on your head;
Deep aisles of odours shall resound with song
And laugh of little children—Yours, O Heart!
For you the shadow of my hand shall fall
Upon Euphrates, seize Chaldea's crown,
Make Nineveh a name within my ring!
Come with me!

LORUHAMAH [*weeping*].
Nay!

SAUL. Come, Loruhamah! Come!

LORUHAMAH [*lifts up her head and gazes steadily into the eyes of Saul. After a moment's pause, she withdraws from him and speaks*].
Oh, I am fearful of a threatened doom—
Dark treachery that weaves a silver web
To drag you down through me to such a fate,
My name would grow a by-word and a hissing,
Should love prevail on me! . . . Rise up, my Saul!
Ascend the throne and rule your people well;
Lose your great pain in plans of magnitude
So vast, a god's white, awful arm might shake,
Fulfilling them! This must you do for me:
Then pride shall wrestle with my woman's will
And conquer when I shall most want to weep!

AHIMELECH [*moves over to Loruhamah with uplifted hands*].
On you be shadowing of seraphim!

AHINOAM [*to the people*].
Behold the Infinite in Woman's Love!

PEOPLE [*crowding about Loruhamah and Saul*].
Hail, Loruhamah!

RACHEL [*to herself*].
What new craft is this?

PEOPLE. All hail, King Saul!

SAUL. I—I am not your King!
What doom is this that closes in on me?

PEOPLE. King Saul!

SAUL [*to Loruhamah*].

You—even you?

LORUHAMAH. The gods have said!

AHIMELECH [*bows down before Saul*].

In Aaron's name I greet you!

[*One by one the Elders pass before him and bow.*]

PEOPLE. Hail, King Saul!

SAUL. Oh, how you storm and thunder it at me!

[*With uplifted hands he addresses the heavens.*]

O silent sky! Who then will plead for Saul?

[*He waits as for a sign from heaven; then his hands fall to his side.*]

There is no answer, neither any sign!

[*Throwing his head back, he lifts up his hands in show of placing a crown upon his brow.*]

Rest on my head, O Crown of Israel!
Become a quenchless burning on my brow;
Fill me with strength to die from day to day,
That these may live!

[*To Loruhamah.*]

Into the vale of tears
I weeping go! . . . I shall not see your face;
I shall not hear your voice; I shall not find
You waiting with your jar beside the well,
When lingering day looks back upon the hills—
Red from the glory of his mighty wings,
Held for one mortal moment in surprise
Earth should so rival heaven with yourself!

[*To Ahimelech.*]
Priest of the Lord, to-morrow it shall be
Gold on my forehead, iron in my soul;
And may Jehovah not forget the pain
That makes of me a living sacrifice!
[*To the people.*]
I am your King, since you will have it so.

AHIMELECH [*to the people*].
And you will pray that Saul may guard you well,
Driving the Philistine from out our land;
Lifting the shadow of the Moabite
From every home, till Beersheba and Dan
Shine like the Guardians of the Polar Star,
Watching the fruitful valleys and the hills.
[*He pauses as in a vision, kindles at what he sees, then breaks into prophecy.*]
Yea, mine eyes see it far beyond the years:
The mountain of the Lord is throne of Saul!
From desert-desolation to the sea,
From sea to river and wide-reaching land,
The merchants and the traders come and go!
How hath the little swallowed up the great!
How Nineveh and Babylon bow down!
Egypt and Tyre come creeping to our feet,
And all the myrrh of Araby is poured
By hands of adoration on Saul's head!
He will build marble towers to the sun,
And top them with the crescent of the moon;
Gibeah shall have gates of graven gold;

There shall be fountains; yea, there shall be wine
Poured out in rivers; yea, there shall be dancing;
Yea, song and laughter shall be everywhere!
He shall be very great—shall conquer Kings—
Shall be of all most envied——

SAUL [*with a bitter cry to Loruhamah*].

And my heart
Shall call in vain for you, my Rose of God!

[*A wild gleam of sunlight bursts from a gathering cloud and falls upon Saul and Loruhamah. From the city there is a noise of trumpets blowing softly over the barley-fields.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II

TIME.—*The day of the dedication of Saul's palace at Gibeah, and eight years after his coronation.*

SCENE.—*Before the royal palace, situated on a hill that overlooks the valley of the Jordan. The right portico of the palace only is visible, and it runs diagonally to rear, meeting a high balustrade that extends across the back of the court to a thick grove of palms at left, through which a road winds down to the city. The portico is of marble, supported by slender pillars; it is approached by a wide and gradual flight of seven steps, rising from the pavement of the courtyard. Beyond the central pillars are two-leafed doors of bronze that open from the palace. In the centre of the courtyard is a dial of gold, resting on a column of basalt that is based on a three-stepped pedestal.*

At rise of curtain, a shout of many voices. The pavement is thronged with people, and a band of girls are dancing about the dial to the accompaniment of dulcimers and cymbals. Along the steps of the portico are ranged

white-robed Levites with rams' horns. Saul stands between the central pillars—crowned and in a purple robe; below him are Samuel and Ahimelech.

At a blast on the horns the dancing ceases and the Levites chant a hymn to Saul.

LEVITES. Hand of Jehovah,
Smiter of hosts!
Bared for the battle,
Bending the bow;
Dead are thy foemen,
Sheol their ghosts
Guardeth forever—
Wailing with woe!

PEOPLE. Hail, Saul!

A LEVITE [*in recitative*].
Where is the yoke of the oppressor;
Where is the goad of those who ploughed with us?

LEVITES [*in antiphon*].
The yoke of the oppressor Saul hath broken;
And he hath turned the goad against the hand
Of those who ploughed with us—Mighty is Saul!

SAMUEL [*lifting up his hand*].
Children of Israel.

PEOPLE. The Prophet speaks.

SAMUEL. My little children, whom my love hath led

Throughout the years, for the last time my voice
Pleads your devotion to the Covenant.
Let no uncleanness stain your purity,
Neither defilement work inquity
Within your hearts; for ye are holiness!
Young is your King and I am very old—
I who have served you all these heavy years;
Therefore I would have you and him this day
Join hands of consecration to the Lord,
Pledging yourselves to purge this Promised Land
From filth of idols. Ye are separate;
Ye are a chosen race; ye are a priesthood;
Ye are a commonwealth of kings.
[*Turns and points to Saul.*]
Behold
The Pillar of the House of Abraham!
More than a Sabbath Year has passed since ye
Drew him, humble and hiding from your gaze,
Placed and enthroned him over Israel;
To-day his palace is completed, stands
In beauty on this hill to typify
For all the Tribes, strength and establishment.
His victories are many, and his arm
Hath smitten Ammon; while Philistia
Trembles from Aijalon to Gath!

PEOPLE. King Saul!

SAMUEL. This be your strength: if ye lift eyes to Him,

The Mighty One of Israel, Who saith,
"Thou shalt not make of graven images
Gods, as the heathen do!"

LEVITES [*chanting*].

The Lord is God!

SAUL [*lifting up his hand to the people*].

My people, harken unto Saul.

PEOPLE [*bowing the head and bending the knee*].

Saul! Saul!

SAUL. Too long hath this land groaned beneath the yoke
Of Ammon, Moab and Philistia.
Our strength is still the strength of tender babes.
How shall we drive these heathen hordes from us?
Their number is like sand upon the shore;
And though in battle we have beaten them,
Once more they roll a wave of threatening
Against our vineyards and our harvest-fields.
Not far from us, and born of Esau's loins,
Is Edom—once our ancient enemy,
But now with Jacob gladly reconciled;
And in an earnest of fidelity,
Doeg, her greatest son, comes swift to Saul,
Laden with precious gifts, and promises
Of an unfailing help and hand of her:
Therefore, I make him my Chief Minister,
That he may walk with me along the path
Of conquest, till the kingdom's shadow fall

Like doom upon the gates of Babylon!

[*The doors of the palace open and Doeg appears in robes of state. He approaches Saul, who embraces him with great show of affection. The people greet Doeg with shouts of joy.*]

PEOPLE. Doeg! . . . Esau! . . . Edom! . . . Hail, Doeg! Hail!

DOEG [*to Saul*].

Esau sends greeting to his brother Jacob!

SAUL [*kissing him on the right cheek*].

And Jacob now meets Esau with his love!

AHIMELECH [*with fervour*].

'Tis prophecy fulfilled! The elder bows
Down to the younger son!

A LEVITE [*triumphantly*].

Fulfilled the Scripture!

SAMUEL [*kindling with anger at Saul*].

Saul, thou hast sinned!

SAUL [*in surprise*].

My father!

SAMUEL [*sorrowfully*].

Oh, my son!
What hast thou done?

SAUL [*taking Doeg by the hand*].

Caused Esau to join hands
Of love with Jacob!

SAMUEL. Edom is defiled
With idols and is stained with harlotries
Of Ashtoreth!

SAUL [*leans back against a pillar as in pain*].
O haunting Memory!

DOEG [*to Samuel*].
Great Prophet of Jehovah, whom the night
Blinds not with darkness, and to whom the day
Reveals what his ten thousand voices sing!
Prophet of the Most High, Who is above
All other gods and ruleth over them!
To thee I plead for Edom and myself.
Two sons were born of Isaac, son of Abram,
Esau and Jacob—children of the promise:—
"And in thy seed shall all the earth be blessed!"
One of these sons was called "Supplanter"; Why?
Who wrested from his brother that birthright,
Given from ancient days to the First Born?
Called by whatever name, that deed was wrong!
Esau was heir of all the promises,
And by deceit did Jacob cover them
With hands of theft and filch them for his race;
Yet Esau in the end forgave the deed,
And still forgives through me, Saul's Minister,
Who am of Edom—sprung from Esau's loins!

SAMUEL [*recoiling from Doeg*].
Thou snake of evil! . . . Edom, back from me!
Not till that day when Esau's hands are cleansed
From blood of bullocks unto idols poured,
Shall Jacob walk with him!

[*To Saul.*]

I pray thee, Saul,
Have done with Doeg with his lying tongue!

SAUL. Nay, Father Samuel, my word is spoken!

SAMUEL [*tearing his mantle from top to bottom*].
Then as this robe sunders betwixt my hands,
Jehovah will divide thy spirit's self;
And more and more a madness will prevail
Upon thy brain with wrong imaginings,
Until thou flee in frenzy through the night
That swallows up eternally thy day!

SAUL [*as Samuel descends to the pavement*].
Samuel!

[*Samuel turns and looks at Saul. The people fall back in awe before him. There is silence; then the Prophet goes out at left.*]

DOEG [*restraining Saul, who prepares to follow Samuel*].
Hold!

SAUL. What have I done! What have I done!

AHIMELECH [*at Saul's side*].
Mind not the Prophet!

SAUL. He has cursed me!

DOEG. Cursed you?
Saul, are you not the King?

AHIMELECH [*to Saul*].
Be not afraid!

DOEG [*to the people*].
Get you unto your homes, and let the night
Pass in wide merriment of dance and song!

Your King will never fail you, and there grows
An army out of Edom that shall pour
Streams of destruction on Philistia!

[*With salutations and cries of joy the people descend to the city. At a sign from Ahimelech the Levites also go. Saul, Ahimelech and Doeg come down the steps of the portico and stand near the dial.*]

SAUL [*as the shouts die away in the distance*].
Already burns the crown upon my head!

DOEG. There is a way to win your Samuel
And satisfy him also of my faith.

SAUL. I pray you tell me, for my heart is heavy.

DOEG [*smiting a clenched fist on the palm of his hand*].
Him it will pacify!

AHIMELECH [*to Doeg*].
Be your words sudden!

DOEG. This! . . . Let the King's decree go forth against
Idolaters and all who peep and mutter,
Forbidding them the borders of this land,
And placing on their heads the price of death;
Let this be done forthwith in Doeg's name,
As the Chief Minister of Saul!

AHIMELECH [*joyously*].
Hosanna!
You are a minister in sooth!

SAUL [*restored and comforted, embraces Doeg*].
O friend!

DOEG. 'Tis but a tithe of what I mean to do!
[*To Ahimelech.*]
Come you with me and make the writing ready.

AHIMELECH. Yea, let no time be lost in doing this.

SAUL [*as they make obeisance to him*].
Good friends, how you have comforted your King!
[*Doeg and Ahimelech ascend the steps of the portico and enter the palace. Saul watches them go, then turns and paces up and down the pavement in deep thought. Suddenly, he pauses at the dial, goes up the steps, takes the crown from his head and places it on the golden round. With a sigh of relief, he shakes his abundant dark hair over his shoulders. At this moment the doors of the palace open, and Ahinoam appears between the pillars. She sees Saul, and with a laugh runs to his waiting arms.*]

AHINOAM. Saul, and uncrowned!

SAUL. Ahinoam!

AHINOAM. My Lord!

SAUL. How finds the Queen Ahinoam her home?

AHINOAM. I shall be lost amid its many rooms.

SAUL. You and your babes will find your way through them.

AHINOAM. A moment past and Jonathan was found
High on the throne and gazing down the hall!

SAUL. A kingly lad!
AHINOAM. Our first born!
SAUL. Gift of you!
We shall make kings bow down before his feet!
AHINOAM. And queens shall come with spices and sweet balms
To make oblation to him!
[*Freeing herself from his arms.*]
Come! Bow down
And let Ahinoam crown you her King!
[*Saul kneels on the lower step of the pedestal, as Ahinoam takes the crown from the dial, turns and holds it above his head.*]
O Crown of Israel! enzone with light
My Lord's anointed head, and be on him
A majesty perpetual! Inspire
These brows of thought with wisdom from on High,
That Saul may be of kings the kingliest!
[*Places the crown on Saul's head.*]
SAUL [*rises and takes her hand*].
Now let me lay aside these robes of state,
And in our garden help me to forget
That I am other than the son of Kish—
Home from the harvesting.
AHINOAM [*descends to the pavement and goes with Saul towards the palace*].
Yea, let us go.
There is a couch for you beneath a palm
Hard by a fountain that leaps up and sings.

SAUL. And we will have the young lad Jonathan
And Ishui his brother play for us;
While those wee babies Michal and Merab,
Grope with soft hands about their mother's feet.

[*Gaining the portico, Saul and Ahinoam turn to gaze down the valley.*]

AHINOAM. I did not know the world could be so fair!

SAUL. Yea, it is beautiful! And out of pain
Of an eternal loss and sorrowing
Through you comes peace into my soul again.

[*Their eyes meet. Ahinoam regards Saul with a look that reveals her great and understanding love. Slowly and tenderly he draws her to his side, until she is almost lost within the ample folds of his purple robe. They stand thus for a moment, then turn and enter the palace. From the city the sound of music and laughter is heard faint and afar. Among the trees at left Loruhamah is discovered. She enters the courtyard and approaches the dial. Her face is veiled and her garments sombre. As she reaches the dial, the doors of the palace open and Doeg appears. He stands between the pillars, looking at Loruhamah, who returns his gaze without a word.*]

DOEG. Loruhamah!

[*He descends to her.*]

LORUHAMAH. Why have you sent for me?
DOEG [*standing before her*].
Unveil your face.
LORUHAMAH. To Saul's Chief Minister!
Why have you sent for me?
DOEG. To ask your health.
LORUHAMAH. You jackal-priest of Baal and of Bel!
DOEG [*on his knees at her feet*].
You moonbeam from the brow of Ashtoreth!
LORUHAMAH. Writhe hence from me, you snake upon the floor!
DOEG [*leaping to his feet*].
What will you give for Saul?
LORUHAMAH. An Edomite!
DOEG. Would you have him from pale Ahinoam?
LORUHAMAH. Why have you sent for me?
DOEG. To lift you high
Beyond all heights that ever woman dreamed.
Unveil your face!
[*Loruhamah removes the veil.*]
By Bel and Ashtoreth!
Time is triumphant with the infinite,
And wins to deathless beauty in your eyes!
LORUHAMAH. Come, cease your vapourings and speak your word.
DOEG. This would I have you do: Disguise yourself
And serve among the maidens of the Queen;

'Tis such a place where one might whisper words!

LORUHAMAH. Why all this wickedness?

DOEG. Upon the loom
The gods spin many patterns!

LORUHAMAH. Always the gods!

DOEG. Always the gods! . . . I tell you, Loruhamah,
We are the chosen of the waiting gods
To build their broken altars and their shrines
Upon the hills of Canaan!

LORUHAMAH. Build their altars!
You speak as though you were among the gods—!
So far they stand above this little world,
Our prayers are but a cloud of desert-dust
Blown up by winds to silent pyramids!

DOEG. Nay, you are wrong! The gods are much concerned—
They call that good which they do most desire—
That evil where they fail: and who of men
Help them attain are blessed, and who impede
Are cursed.

LORUHAMAH. Then good is not!

DOEG. You speak the truth!
There is no good, nor is there any bad;
And sin—of which these Hebrew cattle prate—
Is but an arrow shot beyond the mark. . . .
Come, Loruhamah, choose with me the world!

LORUHAMAH. The world? . . . I tell you, Doeg,
it shall fall!
Memphis and Nineveh and Babylon
Shall fall; and them the weeping, pallid years
Wind in the mummy-sheets of drifting sand!
DOEG. Be not so hateful of the world that gives
Life and sweet love and all the joys of gold
To those who rise above the sweating crowd—
Make slaves of them and buy like merchandise
Their bodies in the market-place, make them
Tread in the press to yield their master's wine!
This, Loruhamah, will I give to you,
If you but turn your beauty on the King!
LORUHAMAH. On Saul?
DOEG. Those eyes of sapphire turn on Saul;
Weave of that bronze-hued hair a net for him;
Engulf him in a passion for your lips;
Then hurl his soul to Tophet and the damned!
LORUHAMAH. You sink of utter filthiness!
DOEG [*seizing her wrist*].
You fool!
LORUHAMAH. Defile me not with touch of you,
you toad!
DOEG [*releasing her*].
Nay, Priestess! Nay! You are beside your-
self,
Who can not see that I am all your friend.
Where is your pride, to let Ahinoam
Rob you of Saul?
LORUHAMAH. My love is not the less,

Because upon his life another love
Is shed!

DOEG. Did Loruhamah speak? . . . Your blood
Has turned to milk! Are you the one I knew
Past years in Askelon—wild, wantoning,
Imperious, resentful of the least
Light opposition, swift to anger, slow
To pardon an offence? . . . Are you indeed
That Loruhamah, the proud Tyrian,
Whom every king of Canaan coveted?

LORUHAMAH. I am that Loruhamah whom the love
Of Saul made womanly, and wise to hear
The hiss of adders in your many words!

DOEG. My hand is in the hand of Ashtoreth!

LORUHAMAH. May it be withered there!

DOEG. Exiled from her,
Where will you go?

LORUHAMAH. The shadow at your side,
Preventing you!

DOEG. Preventing me?—ha, ha!
[*Draws a scroll from his girdle.*]
The King's decree awaits his signature
Against soothsayers; now are you condemned
And driven from this land! . . . The cords are tight,
My Priestess!

LORUHAMAH [*startled and staring at the scroll*].
You—you——!

DOEG. Well?

LORUHAMAH. You say that Saul——!

DOEG. That Saul has issued a decree against
Soothsayers! You will throw your shadow far,
Or ever you prevent me!

LORUHAMAH. Saul has not
Commanded this!

DOEG [*offering her the decree*].
Then read the writing.

LORUHAMAH [*takes the scroll and reads*].
Saul!

[*The scroll falls from her hand; Doeg picks it up and watches her with a smile of triumph.*]

DOEG. Poor Loruhamah!

LORUHAMAH. I—I——!

DOEG. Just one word,
And I will make the writing void.

LORUHAMAH [*breathlessly*].
You mean——?

DOEG. That which I say.

LORUHAMAH [*bitterly*].
O Ashtoreth!

DOEG. One word!

LORUHAMAH. O Serpent! I am in your coils.

DOEG. Come, show your wisdom.

LORUHAMAH. In destroying Saul?

DOEG. Not in destroying him.

LORUHAMAH. You said that I
Must lure his soul to Tophet!

DOEG. Soul—not body!
Destroy his trust in what he deems divine,

Until Jehovah is for him a name,
And all that he held holy is a name,
His crown, his throne, his kingdom but a name—
An empty sound—a cry across the waste
And wildness of the world! As for the rest—
I care not; have your way with what is left!

LORUHAMAH [*with a cry of anguish*].

His body I may have, but not his soul—
His soul that held me that first night we met
In Askelon—the soul of Saul that holds
Me steadfast to the dream that we may meet
Somewhere beyond the boundaries of earth,
When love has conquered the indifference
Of all the gods! Destroy his soul and keep
His body—! Pour the wine out—keep the jar!
Shatter the harp and keep the soundless strings!
Better this flesh were shredded to the bone;
These eyes torn out, to which great minstrels sang,
And all my beauty vanished into dust;
Than my fair womanhood work witchery
And bane of madness on the man I love!
Oh, little do you know of women, who
Set sex against the highest; think we care
For trinkets—that our hearts are satisfied
With dulcet strummings of a psaltery
In dim seraglios! . . . Set my sex against
The soul of Saul and wreck him with a kiss?
Now by the womanhood that you despise,

I will not do this thing—not for the gods
Who shame their high estate with use of you!
And though you lead Saul to the gates of hell,
And hurl him to the lowest pit thereof,
My love will follow after him; my tears
Quench the last fire that burns to torture him;
My cry assail the doors of heaven until
The gods rise up and bid us enter in!

[*As Loruhamah finishes these words, the doors of the palace open and Saul appears. She covers her face with her mantle and moves swiftly out at left, disappearing among the trees. Saul stands between the pillars gazing after her. Doeg turns to the King and makes obeisance. Saul slowly descends to Doeg.*]

SAUL. Who is that woman?

DOEG. A witless creature, crazed
By loss of him she loved.

SAUL. Of him she loved!
Deal tenderly with her.

DOEG. Yea, tenderly!
The writing waits your signature, my Lord.

[*Saul takes the decree from Doeg and reads it.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT III

TIME.—*The day after Saul's victory over Amalek, and ten years since the dedication of the palace.*

SCENE I.—*Before the palace at Gibeah. It is early morning. Doeg and Ahimelech are standing between the central pillars of the portico.*

DOEG. I say the kingdom is in jeopardy!
AHIMELECH. And I that you are wrong!
DOEG [*looking over his shoulder*].
Descend with me—
I would speak plainly.
AHIMELECH [*as they descend to the courtyard*].
That is not your way.
DOEG [*quickly*].
What do you say?
AHIMELECH. The direct word is not
One of your virtues.
DOEG. Nor is wisdom yours.
AHIMELECH [*pausing at the dial*].
Wisdom! Wisdom! Is it a weed that grows
Only in Edom?
DOEG. Your unwillingness

To heed my words is proof the wisdom-weed
Grows not within the Tabernacle.

AHIMELECH. So?

DOEG. I say an evil spirit troubles Saul!

AHIMELECH. Saul the Anointed? How your folly grows!

DOEG. Has he not times of madness, when he stares,
Foams furious and flaming through the night?

AHIMELECH. These sudden moods are whisperings of wind
Upon a harp whose tightened cords to sound
Are over-sensitive. We made him king
Despite his pleading for a lawless love—
A love that follows him across the years
And will not let him go.

DOEG. Ahinoam
Would thank you for this word!

AHIMELECH. Did she not know?

DOEG. And knowing slowly dies!

AHIMELECH. It is not grief
That wastes her body, for the King is kind
And tender to her.

DOEG. Smoke of sacrifice
Has made you blind, who cannot see the Queen
Is hurt by Saul's neglect and scorn of her.

AHIMELECH. You speak thus of your friend?

DOEG. He uses me!

AHIMELECH. Drinks wine with you from his great cup of gold;

Rides with you in his chariot and gives
You place and state of Prince in Israel!

DOEG. Only in turn for that which Edom gives—
An army and a name that terrifies
Moab, Philistia and Amalek. . . .
Can you not see that Saul is also filled
With envy of your ephod?

AHIMELECH. What do you say?

DOEG. Have you forgotten Gilgal?

AHIMELECH. Why Gilgal?

DOEG. Who offered sacrifice in place of you?

AHIMELECH. There was a need for that.

DOEG. Bah! Need for what?

AHIMELECH. The Prophet tarried and I was delayed.

DOEG.
Pretext of Saul, I say—pretext of Saul!

AHIMELECH.
Divine what you have seen, O Eyes of Heaven!

DOEG.
The King is lifting up his hand to clutch
And tear the turban from your priestly head!

AHIMELECH. Doeg, henceforth let Balaam be your name!

DOEG. And you his ass!

AHIMELECH. Who brayed his master down!

DOEG. Guard well your altar, that is what I say;
Saul craves your pomegranates and golden bells!

AHIMELECH. It is not in your nature to know Saul.

Snake! Adder curled among the lilies, poised
To strike at unsuspecting feet that pass
To homes of laughter! There is a stain on you,
And in your double speech maliciousness!
[*Enter at left a runner from the host of Saul. He falls at the feet of Doeg, speaking breathlessly.*]

MESSENGER. Tidings!

DOEG. How went the battle?

MESSENGER. Agag flees,
And Saul pursues and overtakes!

AHIMELECH [*clapping his hands*]. Hosanna!

[*Doeg turns aside and lifts up clenched hands of anger.*]

[CURTAIN.]

SCENE II.—*The same. It is late afternoon. The pillars of the portico are festooned with flowers and leaves; garlands are looped along the balustrade. Merab and Michal descend to the pavement with long white lilies in their arms. They approach the dial, where they sit plaiting the lily-stalks.*

MERAB [*holding up a lily*].
Michal, how long my lily is!

MICHAL [*placing one of her lilies against Merab's*]. They match.

MERAB [*looking for another*].
Twine them together with a third.
MICHAL [*also looking*].
'Tis found.
MERAB [*plaiting the stalks*].
I give you choice of names for my three lilies.
MICHAL [*laughing*].
My first is David!
MERAB [*looking up*].
Mine is Adriel!
MICHAL. Fie on you! Taker back of pretty gifts,
Did you not give the choice of names to me?
MERAB [*holding up the lilies*].
I give you all names, dear, save Adriel.
MICHAL. I yield you that, though now I have but two.
[*Knits her brows in thought.*]
My first is David!—and my second—David!
MERAB. Now let love justify my greediness:
My first, second and third are Adriel!
MICHAL [*pretending petulance*].
You have named Adriel above my David!
MERAB. Proving that he has all my heart!
MICHAL. Well said,
Sister! How love has made us wise!
MERAB. Most wise!
How long have you loved David?
MICHAL [*dreamily*].
Oh, it seems

Eternity is measure of that love!

MERAB. And that I know for princely Adriel!

MICHAL. From month of Nisan until now, three months
Have brought the blossoming of lily-buds
Since David came from Bethlehem to play
Saul out of sorrow—and three months since I
Have chorused to his music with my heart.

MERAB. Less time has taught me love for Adriel!

MICHAL. When David plays the brooks run past my feet!

MERAB. My Adriel is like a goodly palm
High where the hyssop grows!
[*She breaks off a lily-stalk, pretending to pipe it.*]
It will not sound.
[*She drops the lily and goes to the balustrade at right, where she stands gazing down the valley. Michal ascends the pedestal with her plaited lilies and begins to twine them about the dial. Merab calls to her.*]
A cloud of dust is in the distance—see!
[*Michal drops her garland and crosses over to Merab.*]

MICHAL. The chariots of Saul!

MERAB. Light on the hills,
As of uplifted spears!

MICHAL. Far sound of thunder!

MERAB. Of horses galloping!

[*Loruhamah, disguised as an old woman with a wicker cage of doves, enters at left.*]

LORUHAMAH. Doves! Who will buy
Doves for the sacrifice?

[*Michal and Merab draw near to Loruhamah.*]

MICHAL. Oh, beautiful!

LORUHAMAH [*to Michal*].
If there is on your maiden-soul one spot
Of tainting sin, a memory of wrong
Done in a moment of some wild delight
Banned by the Law; or if within your ears
Soft cadences of words prohibited,
Condemned by ancient custom will not die;
Then each white throat of these my pretty doves,
Slit by the sacrificial knife, will bleed
To wash defilement from you, or to still
The haunting voices.

MICHAL. Not for sacrifice!

LORUHAMAH. The innocent must for the guilty bleed!

MICHAL. No! No!

LORUHAMAH. Thus it is written in the Law!

MICHAL. Must all frail things bleed at some altar-stone?

LORUHAMAH. Is it not written in the Law?

MICHAL. The Law!
What curse is on the world that stain of blood
Is on all upward roads that lead to God?

[*She takes the cage from Loruhamah and goes down to the dial.*]

These I will save from death.

LORUHAMAH [*following Michal*].

What will you give?

MICHAL. What will I give? . . . My girdle has no purse.

LORUHAMAH [*pointing to the signet ring on Michal's hand*].

Give me that ring.

MICHAL. The ring my father gave?

LORUHAMAH. Then must the doves be sold for sacrifice.

MERAB [*at Michal's side*].

Give her the ring.

MICHAL [*to Merab*].

I would not part with it.

MERAB. Nay, sister, let her have the ring.

[*Michal hands the cage to Merab and slowly draws the ring from her hand. She looks at it tenderly, then offers it to Loruhamah.*]

MICHAL. Take it!

[*Loruhamah moves down to front and slips the ring on her finger.*]

LORUHAMAH. A goodly gift!

[*Michal and Merab sit on the left of the pedestal with the doves between them.*]

MICHAL. Saved from the sacrifice!

MERAB [*holding up the cage*].

White as the wings of angels in the dawn!

LORUHAMAH [*kissing the ring*].

Oh, Saul!

MICHAL. How many are there?

MERAB [*counting*].

One, two, three—

LORUHAMAH [*studying the signet*].

His name is here!

MERAB. Come, cease your fluttering!

MICHAL. You frighten them.

LORUHAMAH [*in tears*].

Oh, Saul! Saul!

[*Loruhamah covers her face with her hands. Michal looks up and sees her.*]

MICHAL. The woman weeps!

MERAB. Her face is in her hands!

MICHAL. I will go to her.

Take them into the garden.

[*Michal goes down to Loruhamah, as Merab ascends to the portico and passes into the palace with the doves.*]

Why do you weep?

LORUHAMAH [*uncovers her face and looks at Michal*].

For all who suffer loss!

MICHAL [*gazing thoughtfully at Loruhamah, realizes her beauty.*]

A moment past
I thought you old and bitter; now I see
That you are young and very beautiful!
Those lines of age upon your face are false;

That palsied body stands erect and strong:
You are disguised! . . . Why are you here—disguised?

LORUHAMAH. I have a work to do that must be done
In secret.

MICHAL. Here within the palace?

LORUHAMAH. Yes.

MICHAL. Whom does your task concern?

LORUHAMAH. The King, your father!

MICHAL [*fearfully*].
Oh, not for harm of him!

LORUHAMAH. To save from harm!

MICHAL. What danger threatens Saul?

LORUHAMAH. That I will tell—
Once on a time a maiden loved a man,
Who was of all men kingliest.

MICHAL. Like Saul!

LORUHAMAH. And she for his sake slew her love.

MICHAL. Slew love!

LORUHAMAH. For love of him she slew her love.

MICHAL. Wrong, wrong!

LORUHAMAH. Think you that it was wrong? Then listen well:
This man was called to sit upon a throne,
And she was lowly and without the Law;
Therefore, that he might reign, she slew her love.

MICHAL. How did she slay her love—love that is deathless?

LORUHAMAH. By living lonely all her days apart
From him she loved.
MICHAL. And did they never meet?
LORUHAMAH. Once only.
MICHAL. Did he know?
LORUHAMAH. He did not know.
MICHAL. Oh, why did she not let him know?
LORUHAMAH. Because
She thought her heart was wise! . . . But listen, child:
Year after year she followed him and found
How he was hurt through very love of her—
How all the sacrifice was made in vain—
That he grew dark with grief and suffering,
While she, the beautiful whom he had wed,
Faded to a wan shadow of herself,
Knowing the gods had destined him for doom!
MICHAL [*in tears*].
Dost thou in parable tell me of Saul?
LORUHAMAH. The parable is read!
MICHAL. Are you that maid?
LORUHAMAH. I am that Loruhamah, whom Saul loved!
MICHAL. And you are here to shelter him from harm?
LORUHAMAH. As you have said.
MICHAL. What is this harm?
LORUHAMAH. Doeg!
MICHAL. Doeg! Is he not called the friend of Saul?

LORUHAMAH. He plots against Jehovah, and the King
Stands in his way.
MICHAL. But what can Michal do?
LORUHAMAH. Be watchful from henceforth and bring me word
Of Doeg. Let your hand be hid, your lips
Closed on your knowledge. You must be eyes, ears
And feet for Loruhamah; come and go
Between this palace and my cave at Endor;
Thus may I baffle Doeg and his guile.
MICHAL. I will.
LORUHAMAH [*opens her arms to Michal*].
My arms are empty! Michal, come!
MICHAL [*regarding Loruhamah with growing love*].
Your eyes draw me, as water to the sun!
[*She steals into Loruhamah's arms.*]
LORUHAMAH [*bending over Michal's face and kissing her*].
O my most beautiful!
MICHAL. My heart is yours!
LORUHAMAH. It is an instrument of many strings
That stir to music of an olden song!
[*A blast of trumpets from the city with shout of voices.*]
Voices. Saul! Saul!

LORUHAMAH. The King is coming! Quick! Away!

[*Michal with a final embrace turns from Loruhamah and ascends to the palace. Loruhamah goes out at left and is lost to view among the trees.*]

VOICES [*growing near*].

Ha, ha, Agag! . . . Now Saul has done for you!

Saul! Saul! . . . Stone Agag! . . . Flay the dog alive!

[*The sound of a harp is heard and then the voice of David singing. He enters at left, followed by Saul, walking between Jonathan and Ishui.*]

DAVID [*singing*].

Harp of the shepherd that sings of the sword,
Twang of the bow and the thunder of shields,
Sing of the light and the love of the Lord
Filling the valleys of vineyards and fields.

Harp of the shepherd, sing out and sing high;
Shatter the silence of grief and let fall
Joy on the world, till the earth and the sky
Blend with hosannas to Saul—King Saul!

[*David stands near the dial, lightly touching the strings of his harp. Jonathan with a hand on David's shoulder, applauds him.*]

JONATHAN. Oh, bravely sung, my David!

[*He turns to Ishui, who stands at Saul's side.*]

Ishui,

Which sounds the sweeter—harp or harpist?

ISHUI [*laughing*].

Harp

Or harpist! who can sever them?

DAVID. O sons

Of mighty Saul, why will you mock at me?

JONATHAN [*to David*].

We do not mock at you.

DAVID [*looking at Saul, who now stands with folded arms and with a fixed stare*].

See, Jonathan!

The spell is on the King—leave us alone.

[*David approaches Saul, playing softly. Jonathan and Ishui cross the pavement and enter the palace.*]

SAUL. What peace is on me, David, when you play!

DAVID. Oh, let my hand be ever on your heart
To make it musical with songs of peace!

SAUL. Lad, how I love you!

DAVID [*kneeling at Saul's feet*].

Oh, my Lord and King!

[*Ahinoam enters from the palace. She stands above the steps, looking down on Saul and David. The years have greatly altered her. She moves falteringly, supporting her footsteps with a long staff of ebony.*]

AHINOAM. Saul!

[*Saul turns and opens his arms to her.*]

SAUL. Ahinoam.

[*David rises and goes toward the palace as Ahinoam slowly descends to Saul.*]

AHINOAM. Victor of Agag!

[*Saul moves toward Ahinoam. David enters the palace.*]

SAUL [*embracing Ahinoam*].

Yea, I have conquered Amalek and won
Dominion over Agag!

VOICES [*in the distance*].

Saul! Saul! Saul!

SAUL [*kindling at the sound*].

Hear how they shout for me!

AHINOAM [*proudly*].

My valiant one!

SAUL. I have made even mountains clap their hands,
And all waste places of the land rejoice!

[*Enter Samuel at left. The infirmity of old age is on him. He stands leaning on his staff, regarding Saul and Ahinoam.*]

SAMUEL. What means the cattle lowing in the streets,
And bleating of the flocks of Amalek?

[*Saul and Ahinoam start back, facing Samuel, who walks toward them.*]

Why have you not slain Agag?

SAUL [*approaching Samuel*].

He goes back

A ransom for the captured of our host.
The flocks and herds are spared for sacrifice.

SAMUEL. Obedience is the best sacrifice!
To harken, more than offered fat of rams!
Saul, you have sinned! . . . Did I not say to you,
Go, slay Agag and spare not of his flocks?
Always have you been wilful, turned aside
From following Jehovah's Word; and now
This thing that you have done fills to the brim
The cup of your iniquity! Behold,
The kingdom is to-day withdrawn from you
And given to another who shall be
King in your stead!

SAUL [*in anger.*]
Out on you, Samuel!

[*He stands over Samuel, tense and quivering, his right arm uplifted. Ahinoam starts toward him, pauses at the dial, sways and sinks at the pedestal.*]

AHINOAM [*faintly*].
Saul! Saul!

SAMUEL. Cursed of Jehovah, hear my words:
The throne is taken from you and your sons!

SAUL. By the Shekinah——!

AHINOAM [*struggling to her knees and clasping her hands*].
Saul!

SAUL. And by the Pot
Of Mannah——!

AHINOAM. Oh!

SAUL. By Urim and by Thummim!
You have been to me a tormenting thorn!
Waylaid by you in those far years of youth,
And forced by you to wear this fretting crown,
What have I done that you should threaten me
With curses from your God? . . . Do you hear me?—
Your God, and mine no longer Samuel!
Henceforth I stand upon my strength alone,
Regardless of that God Who is so hot
Upon the path of baffled souls that dare. . . .
You stinging wasp of the far Infinite! . . .
You whisperer of secrets in His ear! . . .
You spy of heaven! . . . You——!

AHINOAM. Oh, silence, Saul!

SAMUEL [*to Saul*].
You shall not see my face again!
[*Samuel turns sadly away from Saul and goes toward the road at left. Ahinoam falls forward on her face at the foot of the pedestal. As Samuel gains the road he turns and looks at Saul, the tender man in him revealed by the sorrow on his face*].
My Son!
[*Samuel vanishes down the road. Saul stares after him, then slowly turns and discovers Ahinoam.*]

SAUL. Ahinoam!

[*He bends over her and gathers her to his breast, looking down at her face.*]

Why are you silent? Speak!
Waken, my spouse—my lily of the field—
My well of water in a thirsty land—
My song within the silence of the night!
[*He waits for a moment.*]
You are not dead—not dead, Ahinoam!
[*With a loud cry of sorrow.*]
Yea, dead—dead in my arms, Ahinoam!
Now Time for you is at an end!
[*He lifts up his head in agony of hopeless grief.*]
O Time!
So swift upon the feet of innocence—
And sudden on the hills of happiness,
Why at my heart is your flight long delayed?
[*He goes toward the palace with Ahinoam in his arms. From the wood at left Loruhamah enters. She moves down to the dial, watching Saul, who now ascends the steps of the portico.*]

LORUHAMAH [*as Saul enters the palace*].
O gods above the woe of all the world!
O presences immovable and vast!
Let loose the lightnings of your wrath on me
And spare him stricken to the uttermost!
[*Night and the stars, with the silver glory of the moon on Loruhamah's uplifted face.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT IV

TIME.—*The morning after the battle of the Valley of Elah. A year has passed since the death of Ahinoam.*

SCENE.—*The Throne-Room in the palace at Gibeah. The walls and ceiling are panelled with cedar. The room forms a rectangle with a series of pillars and arches at right, left and rear, beyond which extends a spacious corridor. The pillars are of cedar with capitals of lilies and pomegranates. At left centre the throne stands upon a marble dais of three steps, beneath a purple canopy. The throne is of ivory and inlaid gold, with an elephant's tusks for arms; a lion's skin is over the back, covering the seat. Through the arches at left and right curtained entrances open on the corridor. At rear centre the corridor is broken by a wide arch through which a garden is visible. In the midst of the garden is a fountain. Near the throne, against a pillar, a slender ebon-staffed javelin and a leather shield with bronze bosses. David and Jonathan enter at right and cross the corridor towards the throne. Jonathan*

wears a princely robe, his flowing hair held back by a circlet of silver. David is clad in a simple tunic of white linen, falling to the knees, and girt about the loins with a golden cincture; his abundant yellow hair is caught at the brows with a garland of myrtle leaves. In stature they are tall and of equal height. They stand for a moment within one of the arches at right, Jonathan thrusting an arm before David.

JONATHAN. Hold!

DAVID [*his hand on Jonathan's arm*].
What an arm!

JONATHAN. Bared to resist you, David.

DAVID. A good brown arm.

JONATHAN. And you shall feel its strength
If you refuse my robe.

DAVID. I must.

JONATHAN. You must?
Who dare say that to me?

DAVID. David—your friend.

JONATHAN [*withdraws his arm and embraces David*].
Oh, best of words!
[*He takes off his robe and throws it over David's shoulders.*]
And by that word I bid
You bear my purple!

DAVID [*going towards the throne*].
'Tis a royal robe,
And meet for princes; not for shepherd lads.
JONATHAN [*at David's side*].
Make it more royal by your wearing it.
DAVID [*pauses in laughter*].
A jackal strutting in a lion's skin!
JONATHAN. An angel burning through mortality!
DAVID [*seriously*].
Were you not David's friend your words would hurt me!
JONATHAN. May I not honour you?
DAVID. You called me friend!
JONATHAN. Wear then my purple—'tis of Tyrian make.
DAVID. But you forget your purple marks a prince.
JONATHAN. Princes there are of sudden circumstance,
Who leap into the place of kings by force
Of instant breathing of divinity,
Turn tides of fortune to victorious floods
And win where others fail. . . . Arm of the King!
Your deed of yesterday shall live forever.
Jehovah, when the smitten giant fell,
Lifted a shepherd's name and hung it high
Upon a golden star! . . . Still do I see
You going bravely down the mountain side—

The sunlight gleaming on your yellow hair,
And on the hills the watchful, waiting host!
Oh, how we breathed as with a single breath
While great Goliath's heavy, taunting voice
Bade you to battle, with deriding laughter,
And all the ranks of Gath and Aijalon
Waited your death!

DAVID. There was a Cause that called.

JONATHAN. And all our ears were deaf to it save yours.

DAVID. A shepherd's ears are quick to hear the cry
Of wolves that clamour for the frightened sheep.

JONATHAN. You are the shepherd of Jehovah's sheep!

DAVID. No, no! . . . I am the harpist of the King.

JONATHAN. Redeemer of the host of Israel,
Whose shepherd's sling did smite Goliath dead!
Come, wear my purple robe.

DAVID. I cannot wear
What I have never proved; and that you may
Know David's heart, I take your robe, my friend,
And lay it on the empty throne of Saul!
[*David ascends the throne and throws the robe over its left arm.*]

JONATHAN. Then you shall have my shield and javelin.

DAVID [*as Jonathan takes the shield and javelin*].
Most proudly!

[*Jonathan ascends to David, who takes the shield and javelin from him.*]

JONATHAN. Armed, my Harpist, as for war!

[*David stands with the shield on his left arm—the javelin in his right hand. After a moment's silence he speaks.*]

DAVID. Oh, I am meant to be a man of war—
A thruster with the spear—a thunderer
Upon the shield—a singer of the sword!
[*He pauses.*]
And yet I love the sky all blue above
High Lebanon; the hollow of the hills
Where Spirit-Dreams go dancing down the moss
With Laughter and her softly calling Echoes;
The glimmer of the moonlight on the grapes;
Night and the stars; remoteness of the moon;
Dawn and the minstrel winds whose fingers clutch
The trees like harp-strings twanging them to song!

JONATHAN [*clapping his hands*].
You are for men and not for folding sheep!

[*Enter at right Joab, Abishai, Asahel and Ishui. They cross the corridor and pause between the pillars, looking at David and Jonathan. There is a moment's silence, then laughter and pointing hands.*]

JOAB. Behold them on the throne!
ISHUI. Do they divide it?
ASAHEL. May Jonathan and David be divided?
ABISHAI. Not by a throne.
JOAB. See David with a shield!
Where has the gentle Harpist left his harp?
ASAHEL. Above the gate—hung with Goliath's head!
JOAB. How go the flocks?
ISHUI [*pointing at the javelin*].
Is that a shepherd's staff?
DAVID [*laughing*].
Come hither till I smite you!
JOAB [*advancing with the others*].
Gently, Shepherd!
JONATHAN. Nay, not too gently—Joab's head is hard.
[*They are now at the steps of the throne, looking up at David and Jonathan.*]
DAVID. What wandering sheep are these?
JOAB. Lo, we have strayed
From folds of far Philistia in search
Of one Goliath.
ABISHAI. And our brother sheep
Bleat on the fields of Elah.
DAVID. There shall be
Henceforth one sheepfold—Israel; and one
Great Shepherd—Saul!
JONATHAN. Oh, bravely spoken, David!
JOAB. Harpist, we four are bound by solemn oath

To form a league and covenant with you
And Jonathan for bravest deeds in battle.

ABISHAI [*with uplifted right hand*].
Abishai is sworn!

ASAHEL. And Asahel!

ISHUI. And Ishui!

[*David lets fall the shield near the throne and rests the javelin against an arm of it. He descends to Joab and the others with outstretched hands—Jonathan following.*]

DAVID. Here are my hands in pledge
Of what you swear. . . . Joab the great of heart,
You in your time shall stand where Abner stands—
Head of the host of Saul! . . . Abishai,
Your name shall be among earth's mighty ones! . . .
And you, fleet-footed Asahel, shall bear
Glad tidings down the years! You, Ishui,
Shall pour upon the hands of Jonathan
Balms and the golden oil of Gilead,
When, in the course of Providence, he sits
On yonder throne!

JOAB. And what will David do?

JONATHAN. Sing with his harp until Eternity
Clasp in his arms Time, lilied like a bride
For that embrace!

ISHUI [*looking towards the garden, where Michal stands at the fountain*].

A lilied bride, you say!
Lo, at the fountain waiting Michal stands.

DAVID [*turns and sees Michal*].
Michal!

JONATHAN. Bride of a night, and so neglected!
Fie on you, David!

JOAB [*holding David back*].
Ah, poor Michal! Bought
With one round pebble gathered by the brook
And slung against Goliath yestermorn,
Your purchase price has made you lightly valued!

DAVID [*laughing and struggling against Joab's arms*].
Hold me not back, but let me go to her.

JONATHAN. Shall we go with you, David?
[*David escapes from Joab and goes toward the garden. At the central pillars of the Throne-Room he looks back to the others.*]

DAVID. Whelps of war,
What know you of a maiden and her ways!
[*He enters the garden and joins Michal. They are lost to view among the trees.*]

JONATHAN. What kingliness is on him as he goes!

JOAB. He is a warrior whose voice can ring
Clear like a clanging shield, or trumpet blown
For battle!

ASAHEL. Swift are his words and on the mark—
A spear thrown up the wind by Abner's arm!

ABISHAI. His eye is like a fountain in the sun!
ISHUI. He has a tender heart!
[*Enter Doeg from behind the throne at right.*]
DOEG. Talk you of David?
JONATHAN. With all the world.
JOAB. Was ever such a man?
DOEG. Be wary of him!
JONATHAN. Wary! What do you mean?
DOEG. That which I say.
JOAB. You say much, and your words
Are many.
DOEG. Let my words be few and swift:
Have you not heard the maidens singing, "Saul
Hath slain his thousands, David his ten thousands"?
JOAB. Did they sing that for you, how sweet the song!
JONATHAN. They honour Saul who sing in David's praise.
ISHUI. David who saved the kingdom yesterday.
ABISHAI. Oh, it was wonderful!
ASAHEL. Never a deed
Like David's since the world began.
DOEG. Fools all!
JOAB [*in mock obeisance*].
We give you welcome to our company.
Where were you yesterday?
ABISHAI. Mayhap your hand
Cut off Goliath's head, or gave the sling

To David, or your whisper counselled him
To do the deed!

DOEG. Watch David well, I say!

JONATHAN. We watch him climb his zenith like the sun!

DOEG. He plots against the King!

JOAB [*clutching Doeg's arm*].
Take back that word!

DOEG. I stand on what I say!

JOAB [*releasing him*].
Beware the quicksand!

ABISHAI [*with a laugh*].
Well struck! The wild ass sinks now in the sand.

DOEG [*to Abishai*].
Had you aught but the long ears of an ass,
Then would you know what I have come to know!

JONATHAN. What do you know?

JOAB. Be sure 'tis not the truth.

DOEG. The truth, say you! Where will you find the truth?
Not even on the lips of innocence,
Since lies are suckled with a mother's milk,
And every child goes gaping down the road
After Beelzebub!

JOAB. There you are wrong,
O Lord of Flies, for children shun your face!

ABISHAI [*with a shout of laughter*].
Again! Joab, your wit is like a spear

Thrust through a shield—shield of a wild ass skin
And very tough.

ASAHEL. Tanned in the pits of Edom.

DOEG. Taunt me and break your blunted javelins
Of wit against my wisdom if you will;
I have advised and while you scoff, ascends
The Shepherd step by step the throne of Saul!

JONATHAN. You lying Edomite, what do you mean?

OTHERS. This of the Harpist!

JONATHAN. Never was a youth
More comely and more true! . . . How could he harp
Were God not in his soul?

OTHERS [*clamouring about Doeg*].
The proof! . . . The proof!

[*Doeg draws back, regarding them through half-closed eyes.*]

DOEG. In secret he has been anointed King!

[*There is silence. The young men stand in horror at Doeg's announcement.*]

JONATHAN [*breathlessly*].
Anointed King! . . . By whom?

DOEG [*slowly*].
By Samuel!

JONATHAN. Who told you?

DOEG. Shammah and Abinidab!

JOAB. His brethren!

DOEG. Aye!

JOAB. Then let us go to them.

DOEG. Yes, we will go to them; and you shall see
If Doeg's words are lies as you have said!

[*They follow Doeg out at right. After a pause a sound of a harp in the garden and then the voice of David singing. As the song proceeds the singer appears with Michal coming down the garden towards the arched entrance at rear centre. Michal wears a wreath of wild red roses and her arm is about David's shoulder. They enter and approach the throne.*]

DAVID [*singing*].

O heart, dear heart, heart of the wild red rose!
Hid in the loveliest flower that grows,
Hands of the Seraphim scatter, let fall
Myrrh on thy leaves in the garden of Saul.

O heart, dear heart, heart of the wild red rose!
Breath from the lips of the Cherubim blows
Soft on thy petals; they whisper and call,
Laugh and are glad in the garden of Saul.

O heart, dear heart, heart of the wild red rose!
Light in the gold of the Mercy Seat glows,
Shines like a star on my love's festival;
Michal is mine in the garden of Saul.

MICHAL. What more can Michal give, who gives you all?

DAVID. Was ever heart of lover satisfied?
The rose once kissed compels that kiss again;
A mountain climbed and its wide vision won,
Will have you on the morrow; and the moon
Has secrets only for oft-gazing eyes!

MICHAL. My love is like the sea that lifts white arms
Of yearning to the sun; it is the breath
Of many lilies wan within the noon!

DAVID. My love is rage of summer simoons through
Resisting trees; a hidden stream upon
High hills fed by the everlasting snow;
A lake of fire: all that is opposite
Yet lives in one: the near, the far, the cold,
The hot, the dream and the awakening,
Youth, age, life, death, are stored within one word—
I love you, Michal!

MICHAL. David!

DAVID. And your eyes
Are fair phylacteries of dream that hold
For me the incommunicable Name!

[*He touches the strings of the harp and sings.*]

O Light that overflows,
O Wind that wildly blows;
O sweet and tender grace,
All in one woman's face!

O Love that is like fire,
O Pain that is desire;
O Melodies that start,
All in one woman's heart!

[*As the song dies away, Saul enters from behind the throne, groping blindly with outstretched hands.*]

SAUL. Strange, how the light goes!

MICHAL [*turning to Saul*].
Father!

DAVID [*preventing her*].
Touch him not!

SAUL [*standing before the throne*].
I heard a voice within the sleepless night:—
"Great Saul is dead!"

MICHAL. Oh, let me go to him!

SAUL. Is this darkness of death?

MICHAL. Oh, let me speak!

DAVID. Not while the spell is on him! . . . I will play.

[*He plays softly on the harp.*]

SAUL [*listening*].
It is the wind among the barley-sheaves—
The sound of temple-bells at Askelon!
[*He falters up the throne and stands there uncertainly, touching one of the ivory arms.*]
The throne! . . . I did not seek it! . . . 'Tis the wind
Along the sea at Askelon and breathes
Chill on my face! . . . Where is the messenger?

I hear his tardy feet upon the pavement. . . .
Will she divine for me from Ashtoreth?
This is the temple-stair and that the dome—
O Fair beyond all dreams of loveliness!
Who art thou?

[*He covers his face with his hands and is still.*]

DAVID [*singing*].

My Love came through the fields to me;
The sheaves were stacked, the gleaners gone!
My Love came through the fields to be
Mine till Night kissed the lips of Dawn!

SAUL [*uncovering his face sits on the throne*].

David!

[*David and Michal kneel before the throne.*]

DAVID. Saul, my King!

SAUL. Michal!

MICHAL. My father!

SAUL [*opening his arms to David and Michal*].

Children, hither to my knees!

[*They ascend and kneel before Saul—David placing his harp at his side and taking Michal's hand.*]

Watch well your love and guard it tenderly.

DAVID. Till death us part!

[*Saul rests his hands on their bowed heads in silent blessing.*]

SAUL. David, not for your deed
Of yesterday alone give I this maid
Into your care, but also for your song
That wakens me from darkness of the spell

Which troubles me. What is there in your voice—
What craft of fingers on the sounding strings,
That I am lifted instantly to heights
Out of vast dim abysses when you play?

DAVID. I know not save that in my heart is love
For all things underneath the sky—a sense
Of beauty that I see yet do not see—
Of music that I hear and do not hear—
A consciousness of forces in myself,
Transcending what I see and hear and know!
Sometimes the many-coloured veils of earth
Are lifted by invisible swift hands
And glory of the infinite is near;
Then comes awareness of a comradeship
With God and all His angels, and I rise
Through unknown spaces of the heaven's blue,
Lost in the adoration of a love—
Self-limited and by the creature bound
That it might share the limitless and pure
Possession of itself!

SAUL. Would that I knew
Your secret, lad; for I am lonely—held
A prisoner of sorrow—fed on crusts
Of memory and given bitter drink
Out of Time's cruse that overflows with tears!

DAVID [*standing before Saul with his harp*].
Saul, in a vision I have learned that kings
May not be glad.

SAUL. I, visionless, have learned
This of myself! . . . What did you see?
DAVID. A King
Down by the brook called Cedron; on His head
A crown of thorns and in His eyes the tears!
Behind Him stood a mighty multitude
That melted into distances so far
I could not follow! When I woke from sleep
I sang my King of Sorrow on the harp.
[*David touches the strings and sings.*]

Down by the stream of the waters
Came the King, and His face was sad—
Sad with a grief beyond belief,
For a bitter grief He had:
To be a king means sorrowing—
A king may not be glad!

Down by the stream of the waters
Came the King, and alone at night;
His robe was torn, a crown of thorns
Was on His brow so white:
They placed it there who did not care—
His eyes with tears were bright!

Down by the stream of the waters,
Where it flows through the valley of death,
He came—the King—all sorrowing;
A sob was in His breath:
They broke His heart who stood apart—
The crowd that wondereth!

[*Saul is shaken with tears. Michal steals to his side, soothing him.*]

SAUL. O King of Sorrow! . . . David, who is He?

DAVID. Messias! whom our father Jacob saw.

SAUL. A king may not be glad!

[*Enter at right Doeg, Jonathan, Ishui, Joab, Abishai and Asahel. Doeg's face is lit with triumph—the others revealing consternation, doubt and sorrow.*]

DOEG [*approaching the throne and addressing David*].

Down from the throne!

Defend yourself!

[*Saul starts from the throne and places a hand on David's shoulder, who faces Doeg—Michal standing at his side.*]

SAUL [*to Doeg*]. What mean you thundering
Into my presence and with such wild words?

DOEG. David is treacherous!

SAUL. Play not with words
Lest I forget you are the friend of Saul!

DOEG. Is it my way to blow words down the wind
Like winnowings of wheat?—the maidens sing:
"His thousands Saul hath slain—David ten thousands!"

SAUL. Do they not sing the truth?

DOEG. Wherein the truth?
A stone hurled from a shepherd's sling is set
Upon the scales against the deeds of Saul!

MICHAL [*to Saul*].
Oh, shut those lying lips of him forever!
DOEG [*to Michal*].
My lying lips!—these stand as witnesses
That Samuel anointed David King!
MICHAL [*to Jonathan and Ishui*].
Tell him, my brothers, that his words are lies!
Why are you silent and your faces sad?
Speak, David!
SAUL. David, speak!
DOEG [*to David*].
Now, Innocent!
DAVID [*brokenly*].
My lips are sealed!
MICHAL. David!
DOEG [*to David*]. Deny it!
MICHAL. David!
SAUL. David, tell me it is not true!
[*David kneels before Saul.*]
DAVID. 'Tis true!
[*Michal descends the throne and opens her arms to her brothers.*]
MICHAL. Oh, take me hence!
[*Jonathan kneels at David's side with an arm over his shoulder.*]
JONATHAN. My brother, whom I love,
Make plain this thing!
DAVID. Because I harped and sang
They drew me forth from watching Jesse's flocks

To stand before the King; and ere I went
The Prophet Samuel poured on my head
A cruse of oil, saying: "Thou shalt be King
In place of Saul!"

MICHAL. You should have dashed the cruse
Out of the Prophet's hand before one drop
Of oil wrought treachery against your King!
David, what have you done! David, what have you done!
Was ever love of woman tempted so?
My heart beats now between two loyalties—
The King and you who have betrayed him!

DAVID [*stands and turns to Michal*].
Michal!

MICHAL. Back from me! . . . I must learn to choose the way
My heart would have me go. Till then touch not
This earthen vessel you have filled with tears!
[*The spell of madness is on Saul. His face is twitching and his eyes are fixed and staring.*]

SAUL. Out from my presence, David!
[*Jonathan hands David his harp.*]

DAVID [*playing softly*].
Peace, my King!
[*Saul seizes the javelin.*]

SAUL. Out from my presence, lest I stain with blood
That hair I loved—all yellow like the corn!
[*David turns and goes towards the right; as*

he nears the pillars he turns and speaks to Saul.]

DAVID. O Saul, doubt not that David loves you still!

SAUL [*regarding David reproachfully*].
Now that you fail me, David, all the world
Lies under doubt; and I distrust the grass
Beneath my feet, thinking it hides for me
Distillings from the poisoned jars of death!
Henceforth the birds shall be but harbingers
Of doom; day shall be hot with menacing,
And night become a dread leviathan
Whose myriad eyes glare from a shoreless sea
Upon my lost and sundered soul! No more
Shall little children play about my feet
And with sweet laughter make their King forget
Consuming madness. I shall falter down
The dark into the gulf of Tophet—lost,
Unloved, forgotten! . . . Oh, I think that we
Call Evil by the Name Ineffable
And worship One Who never was man's friend!
Can He be God Who circumscribes the soul
With jots and tittles of an ancient Law,
And damns us for departing from the Faith
That voiced the vision of some prophet—dead?
I will not bow to throned authority
Or turbaned heads whose gaze is on the past,
Like Lot's wife! God is in the Now and Here;
And on the faith of Now and Here I stand.
[*He pauses and leans on the staff of the javelin;*

then with wild laughter he descends the throne and speaks to David.]

Ho, Shepherd! So you did deceive the King
And wile him with your strummings on a harp!
My hand is cunning with a javelin—
A one-stringed instrument on which I play
To sing your death-song, traitor, for you die!

[*He hurls the javelin at David, who in avoiding it lets fall the harp to the floor. The javelin quivers in the pillar behind him. With a cry of fear, Michal runs down and stands between Saul and David.*]

MICHAL. Go, David, lest he slay you in his madness!

[*David goes out at right—Jonathan following him.*]

JONATHAN [*to David*].
I will go with you!

DOEG. Edom, how it speeds!

[*Saul starts to pursue David. He stumbles on the harp, stops, looks down and picks it up. He turns and goes down to front, gazing at the harp which is broken from the fall.*]

SAUL. Your strings are broken! . . . You will never sound
For Saul again! . . . David, what have I done?
[*He turns to Michal.*]
Michal, I too am shattered like this harp!

[*Michal steals weeping to his side.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT V

TIME.—*Early morning of the day of the Battle of Gilboa, and two months after David's flight from Saul.*

SCENE.—*A cave in a mountain at Endor. A flight of steps, hewn out of the rock, ascends at rear centre to a wide opening that leads to the slope of the mountain. Through this opening a vista of night and the paling stars. At left is a low, rude couch covered with a bear's skin. In the centre of the cave stands a brazier of coals, dimly burning. A statue of the goddess Ashtoreth is set in a niche at right of the steps, and before it are hung seven lamps, suspended by chains of gold. A voice of one singing, and then Loruhamah appears at the mouth of the cave. She descends to the brazier and stands behind it, her face lit by the glowing coals. She wears the sumptuous vestments of a priestess of the mysteries of Ashtoreth—a golden snake encircling her brow. The years have added a majestic strength to her beauty. As the song ends, she spreads her hands over the brazier.*

LORUHAMAH [*singing as she descends to the cave*].

Who can borrow
Joy or sorrow,
Light or darkness
Without pain?
Tears and laughter
Follow after:
Day of splendour,
Day of rain!

Drink we pleasure
Without measure,
Gods delight to
Mingle bane;
Nothing matters,
Sorrow shatters
All the baubles
That we gain!

[*Michal is heard without.*]

MICHAL. Priestess of Ashtoreth!

LORUHAMAH [*slowly turning*].

Who stands without?

MICHAL [*appearing dimly in the distance*].

Michal!

LORUHAMAH [*moves swiftly to the steps and stands with open arms, looking up at Michal who is now immediately above her*].

Enter, my dove of early dawn!

MICHAL. Almost am I afraid of you!

LORUHAMAH. Wherefore?

MICHAL. A majesty is on you and a fear
Fills me, as though the mother of a god
Stood where you stand!

LORUHAMAH. Michal, descend to me.
[*Michal descends to Loruhamah, who embraces her and leads over to the couch.*]
Come sit with me and rest and tell me why
You seek me early. Is it well with Saul?

MICHAL [*throwing herself on the couch, buries her face in her hands and bursts into wild weeping*].
Oh, all the world's at end!

LORUHAMAH [*soothing her*].
'Tis at the birth
For you, dear child.

MICHAL. David is driven forth
Forever from the face of Saul!

LORUHAMAH. Michal!

MICHAL. Two months are passed since he went forth from Saul;
And I did let him go from me unkissed!

LORUHAMAH. David gone forth from Saul! Why went he forth?

MICHAL. In secret Samuel anointed him!

LORUHAMAH. When did he this?

MICHAL. The year the Prophet died.

LORUHAMAH. O Saul! Thou utterly forsaken one!

MICHAL. Since David went the King is wild with sorrow,

And rages fearfully within the night!
Doeg has driven him from sin to sin,
Until his name is black as blasphemy!
Ahimelech is slain! and lo, the dawn
Brings up Philistia against the King
Upon Gilboa!

ABNER [*without*].
Priestess of Ashtoreth!

MICHAL [*leaping from the couch*].
'Tis Abner's voice!

ABNER. Woman of Endor!

LORUHAMAH [*pointing to the statue*].
Hide!

[*Michal crosses to the statue and hides behind it.*]

ABNER. Woman of Endor!

LORUHAMAH [*turns to the mouth of the cave*].
Who is calling me?

[*Abner appears at the top of the steps.*]

ABNER. I come from one who stands in need of you.

LORUHAMAH. Tell me your name and his.

ABNER. I may not tell.

LORUHAMAH. Then will I not give ear to you or him.

ABNER. Priestess, a soul in sore distress would see
Light of the infinite unveiled by you.

LORUHAMAH. Do you not know that there is death from Saul

To those who dare to lift the guarded veil?

ABNER. My master is as mighty!

LORUHAMAH. Tempt me not!

ABNER. Priestess, I swear——

LORUHAMAH. Then let your master come.

[*Abner goes out. As he disappears, Michal steps from behind the statue. On her face is the light of an awakening hope.*]

MICHAL. Oh, be to him a voice to guide his feet
Past the old shadows into ways of peace!

LORUHAMAH. My hour is come!

MICHAL. And love at last prevails!

[*Loruhamah approaches the statue and kneels before it as Michal once more conceals herself. Abner re-appears, followed by Saul and Doeg. Saul descends to the floor of the cave, Abner and Doeg standing at the entrance. Saul wears a heavy cloak that hides his armour. He stands near the brazier.*]

SAUL [*looking at the kneeling figure*].
Have you the key that opens Sheol's Gate?

LORUHAMAH. What would you with the dead?

SAUL. Call Samuel!

LORUHAMAH. Do you not know the menacing of gods
Is set against the soul that dares the marge
Of the invisible?

SAUL. Call Samuel!

LORUHAMAH. Plead not for this! There is some other way.

You will not find peace through a shade of Sheol.

SAUL. If you have pity on my troubled soul,
Call Samuel! aye, from the doors of death!
[*Loruhamah bends at the feet of the statue as in silent prayer, Saul watching her. Doeg reveals a tense and straining curiosity. Abner is restless and fearful.*]

LORUHAMAH. Out of the vast of the invisible,
O Mother Ashtoreth, send Samuel!
[*The light of the lamps dies down and a shadow falls on the floor of the cave.*]

ABNER [*to Doeg*].
My blood is touched with chill of icy death!

LORUHAMAH. By all the unlit altars of the gods
Who shrink from dread Jehovah, I command
The shade of Samuel!
[*The lights flicker and go out. A moaning of wind is heard.*]

ABNER [*to Saul*].
Hence from the peril!

LORUHAMAH. Lift up thy hand, O Mother Ashtoreth,
And open wide the gates of Sheol!
[*Muttering of thunder with gleams of lightning.*]

MICHAL [*appearing from behind the statue*].
Oh!
[*She falls swooning to the floor.*]

LORUHAMAH [*with a loud cry*].

Prophet of Israel, appear!

[*A mist begins to gather near the statue and out of the mist the form of a man—white and wavering.*]

DOEG [*shaken for a moment*].

Baal!

ABNER. Jehovah! . . . It is Samuel!

[*He covers his face with his hands and disappears.*]

[*Saul stares at the apparition, then kneels in awe, hiding his face in the folds of his cloak.*]

SAUL. Priestess!

What do you see?

LORUHAMAH. An old man!

SAUL. Samuel!

SAMUEL [*as from a distance*].

Saul!

SAUL. O my father!

SAMUEL. Why hast thou disturbed

My rest?

SAUL. The Oracle will speak no more,
And all my days are dumb with agony!
Jehovah hides his face from me in wrath;
Madness consumes my spirit; and the dark
Hath opened wide its mouth to swallow me!
Give back the vision to these empty eyes,
And in my heart re-light the ancient fire
That burned of old to deeds of bravery;
For I am like a tree without the sap—
A brook cut off from all its upper springs—

A child without swift laughter, and a maid
Lost from her lover on the bridal night!

SAMUEL. This night thou and thy sons shall be with me!

[*The spirit of Samuel fades. With a loud cry, Saul leaps to his feet, staggers, then sinks to the floor, lying with upturned face in a deep swoon. Loruhamah runs over to Saul and kneels at his side, smoothing the hair back from his forehead. The dim light of dawn gathers and fills the cave. Doeg looks down at Saul and Loruhamah with a smile of triumph.*]

LORUHAMAH. Saul! Saul!

DOEG. 'Tis, Loruhamah, as I said!

LORUHAMAH [*looking up*].
Doeg!

DOEG [*descending to the cave*].
The gods have won!

LORUHAMAH [*rising*].
No! No! Saul lives!

DOEG. [*standing over Saul and facing Loruhamah*].
Did you not hear yon shade of Samuel?
Saul dies to-night! and then the kingdom falls
Into my hand. The gods have worked it well.
Ahimelech is dead. David is held
A prisoner at Ziklag in the hand
Of Achish, King of Gath, who works with me.
You thought to thwart me, Loruhamah, strove

To turn aside the counsels of the gods
And woo the sun from running round the world!
Ah, foolish Loruhamah! Woman's wit
Against the large intelligence of man
Fails, as the rivers fail to modify
The saltness of the sea. Twice I forgave
Your folly, and again I would forgive.
[*He draws his sword.*]
Here is my sword. Take it and cleave the heart
Of Saul, and let his blood now expiate
Your sins against the gods who will restore
Her Priestess to the arms of Ashtoreth!

LORUHAMAH. My breast is open to your thirsty sword!
Drink deeply, Doeg, of my proffered wine,
Until with an eternal drunkenness
You drop down wildly, like an errant star
Lost from its orbit, into gulfs of night
That never know the splendour of the dawn!
A woman's wit is in a woman's love;
Invincible through steadfastness of faith,
Patient and waiting, when her moment comes
She claims and wins it, as I here prevail
Upon your serpent-twistings and your guile!

DOEG. What do you win?

LORUHAMAH. Eternity with Saul!

DOEG. You foolish one! The unsubstantial shade
Of Samuel should teach you that the soul,
Dissevered from the flesh is but a breath—

A mist upon the waters—void of sense
And passion of the body. Think you Saul
Lives after death, and that your ghost shall find
Him glorious and an immortal god?
What folly, Loruhamah, do you talk!
Come slay him with my sword and win the gods!

LORUHAMAH. I laugh at you!

DOEG. What poor pretence of laughter!
Come, take the sword and slay!

LORUHAMAH. Give me the sword!

DOEG. Thrust swiftly through his heart!

[*Loruhamah takes the sword from Doeg.*]

LORUHAMAH. Uncover him!

[*Doeg stoops and draws aside the cloak that covers the body of Saul, revealing him in armour.*]

DOEG [*looking up at Loruhamah*].
His breast is covered but his throat is bare!

LORUHAMAH [*lunges swiftly with the sword at Doeg's throat*].
As yours is bare!

[*Doeg, avoiding the thrust, leaps and catches the arm of Loruhamah.*]

DOEG. Now shall you die for this!

[*There is a brief struggle that ends with Doeg wresting the sword from Loruhamah.*]

LORUHAMAH [*offering her breast to Doeg*].
Strike quickly!

DOEG [*drops the point of the sword to the floor*].
Patience, Priestess! Saul shall go
First to the land of shadows, and then—you!
[*He goes over to Saul and prepares to slay him. Loruhamah leaps to Doeg's side and catches his sword arm. Abner appears above the steps.*]

ABNER. What do you, dog of Edom?
[*He descends as Doeg turns and faces him.*]

DOEG. Ah, 'tis Abner!

ABNER [*advancing with drawn sword*].
Draw!

DOEG. What! lots for the crown of Israel?
I drew mine long ago!

ABNER. And lost!

DOEG. And won!
Baal, with thee the minute stands; speed it!
[*They engage with their swords. Loruhamah sits and takes Saul's head into her lap. After a brief struggle, Doeg is mortally wounded —the sword falling from his hands.*]

ABNER [*to Doeg*].
Where now is Baal?

DOEG [*staggers toward the statue with uplifted arms*].
Ashtoreth! . . . I die!
[*He falls dead at the foot of the statue.*]

ABNER [*sheathing his sword*].
Thus perish every enemy of Saul!

[*Saul stirs, opens his eyes and stares about him.*]

SAUL. I heard the gleaners singing through the corn;
Among the barley-sheaves I saw the face
Of Loruhamah!

LORUHAMAH [*bending over Saul*].
Saul!

SAUL [*looking up into Loruhamah's face*].
Who are you?

LORUHAMAH. Saul!

SAUL [*leaning away from Loruhamah on his elbow*].
What do I lying helpless on the floor?
[*He stands and looks vacantly up and down the cave.*]

ABNER [*approaching Saul*].
O King, take courage! We shall do this day
Deeds on the field of battle that will lift
Your name among the mightiest of earth.

SAUL [*slowly recognises Abner*].
Abner!
[*Loruhamah goes over to Michal, gathers her in her arms and bears her to the couch where she tenderly lays her.*]

ABNER. My King!

SAUL [*still confused*].
What do we in this cave?

ABNER. Waiting the call of trumpets for Gilboa.

SAUL. Gilboa? . . . Who lies yonder—dead?

ABNER. Doeg!

[*Saul crosses to the statue and looks down at Doeg.*]

SAUL. Doeg is dead?

[*He looks over his shoulder at Abner.*]

ABNER. Slain by my hand!

SAUL. Wherefore?

ABNER. As you lay sleeping on the floor his sword
Was drawn to slay you and it clashed with mine!

SAUL. He sought to slay his King? I thought him friend!

ABNER. As at the feet of Ashtoreth he fell,
Philistia this day shall fall!

MICHAL [*stirring from her swoon*]. David!

SAUL [*starting*]. Who spoke that name?

LORUHAMAH [*supporting Michal in her arms*]. Your daughter speaks!

MICHAL [*with outstretched hands to Saul*]. My father!

[*Saul goes over to Michal and kneels at her side, Loruhamah opposite to him on the other side of the couch.*]

SAUL. Michal!

[*She clasps her arms about Saul's neck, pillowing her head upon his breast. In the distance is heard the sudden blast of trumpets. Abner ascends the steps and goes out of the*

cave. The light of morning falls on Saul, Michal and Loruhamah.]

MICHAL. See how the morning lights the world!

SAUL [*heavily*].

But not for me!

MICHAL. Hear how the trumpets call!

[*Saul leaps to his feet, strikes his forehead with the palm of his hand and gazes wildly about him. Michal rises from the couch and stands watching Saul. Loruhamah now moves from where she knelt and joins Michal.*]

SAUL. The veil is lifted from me. . . . I recall
What happened here—the awful spirit-form
Of Samuel that prophesied my death!

LORUHAMAH [*to Saul*].

You shall not die!

MICHAL. You shall not die!

SAUL [*gloomily regarding Loruhamah*].

Not die?
Woman, my days are numbered!

LORUHAMAH. You shall live!

SAUL. Would you gainsay the Prophet who has said
This night I shall be with him?

LORUHAMAH. You shall live!

SAUL [*grasping Loruhamah's hands, draws her to him and studies her upturned face*].

Who are you?

LORUHAMAH [*softly*].

One waked from sleep!

SAUL [*dazed and breathless*].

My Priestess!

LORUHAMAH. Saul!

[*Saul and Loruhamah stand gazing at each other. Michal leaves them and goes towards the steps, where she pauses looking up at the rim of the rising sun.*]

SAUL [*to Loruhamah*].

Where have you been?

LORUHAMAH [*stealing into his arms*].

Lost as in dream till now!

SAUL. Those dear and not forgotten words!

LORUHAMAH. We meet

As when we met at Askelon!

SAUL [*with a cry of anguish*].

Too late!

LORUHAMAH. Is it too late to drink the cup of love,

Snatched from our thirsty lips so long ago?

SAUL. But I am doomed to death! outcast! accursed!

LORUHAMAH. My love will find a way to save you, Saul!

SAUL [*pondering her words and moving away from her*].

Your love will find a way? . . . You love me still?

After the silence of the voiceless years

You love me—love me ruined and rejected?

LORUHAMAH [*drawing near to Saul and taking his hand*].

You are not ruined and rejected, Saul;
For love builds that which is not made with hands,
And therefore may not be destroyed by men;
Deep the foundations of its house and high
Its walls are! See! The doors are open now,
And all eternity breaks into song!

SAUL [*enfolds Loruhamah with his arms*].

Your love restores my soul!
The shadows flee!
I am as when we met at Askelon!
[*Lifts up his eyes in prayer.*]
Now is the everlasting love of God
Revealed in faithfulness of human hearts!
By this I know that Thou, the Infinite,
Hast never faltered in Thy care for me;
That Thou Who art above what Thou hast made—
The creature crawling for a space on earth—
For every tear and pang of finite woe
Hath set fulfilment of unending bliss,
When sorrow fails and sin itself becomes
Transfigured, like a scar upon the brow
Of some brave battle-wearied warrior
Returning, after years of fighting, home!
[*Enter Abner above the steps.*]

ABNER. The Philistines are moving on the host!

SAUL [*to Abner*].

Let sound the trumpets! Send the chariot
And company of horsemen hither! Go!
I follow after you!

ABNER. At once, my Lord!

[*Abner leaves the cave in haste.*]

LORUHAMAH [*kneeling at Saul's feet*].

If you have still the love that made me fair
Unto your eyes, then follow far beyond
The line of Eastern hills to Babylon,
And build those promised crystal domes of dream,
Forgetting you were ever Saul the King!

SAUL. The host is waiting on the heights for Saul!

LORUHAMAH [*clasping her hands and looking up at Saul*].

Once you did plead—now Loruhamah pleads.
We cannot call the years back from the knees
Of Ashtoreth, but life is yet most fair
And full of promise for our love delayed.
Oh, take me, Saul! . . . See how I plead to you!
Go not from me to death, but go with me
To life—sweet life! . . . Surely the gods
Are satisfied; they will not grudge the lees
Left in the cup of Loruhamah's love!
I have been strong, kept faith; but now my will
Flows down, like water from an age-long height
Of ice-capped mountain melting in the sun!

SAUL [*tenderly stroking her hair*].

There is no music breathed by lute or harp
Sweeter than your dear voice that tells me this,
And in the knowledge of your love for me
Death will become a falling into sleep;
But my last moment thunders with such sound,
That all earth's voices mingle into it!
Perchance Jehovah has set me this task
In mercy, that my stormy life may end
With some wide splendour of a sunset-sky!
[*Michal comes down and kneels at Loruhamah's side.*]

MICHAL. My father, harken unto Loruhamah!
Behold her tears! Can you withstand her tears?

SAUL. Jehovah calls! who may withstand His voice?
Michal, behold I see where all was dark:
David begins where Saul is at an end,
And Samuel, anointing him, foretold
The House of Jesse following the House
Of Kish upon the throne of Israel.
Go tell David that Saul forgave the deed;
And when they find me dead on Gilboa,
Yield him the crown—yea, place it on his brows,
That song and youth's sweet laughter stir again
Throughout this stricken land, and all the world
Grow glorious and golden in the sun!
[*Saul bends over Loruhamah, takes her hands and lifts her to his side.*]
My Loruhamah, one fair city waits
Our coming—fairer than far Babylon—